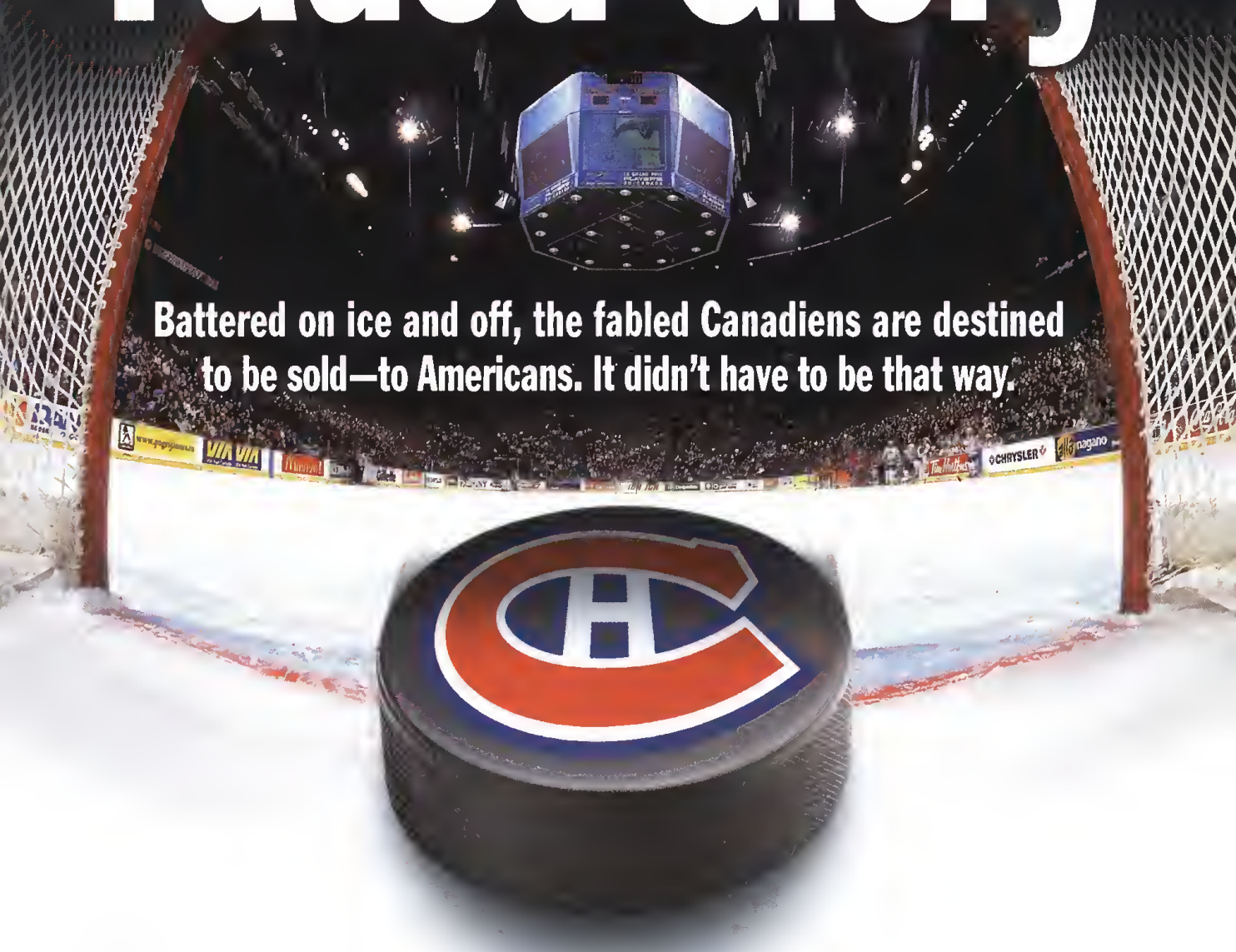
Canada's Weekly Newsmagazine
Maclean's
February 5, 2001 www.macleans.ca $4.50



ELECTION IN ISRAEL
End of the Peace Process?

Faded Glory



Battered on ice and off, the fabled Canadiens are destined to be sold—to Americans. It didn't have to be that way.

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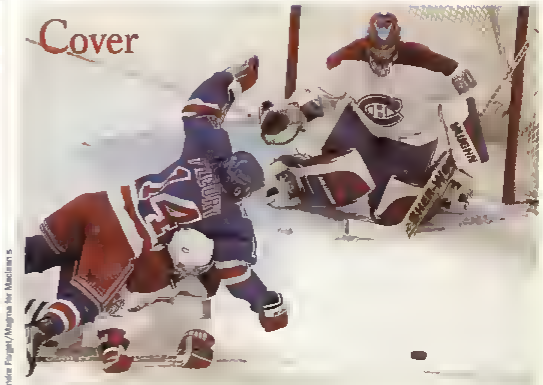
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ROGERS MEDIA



Andre Forget/Maclean's

38 Faded glory

Hockey's most storied franchise is in a terrible slump. The Montreal Canadiens are nowhere near a playoff spot, there are thousands of empty seats most nights at the Molson Centre, and the owner, tired of losing money, is selling the team, probably to Americans. Sadly for Habs fans, it didn't have to be that way.

Features



AP

Special Report

20 End of the peace process?

Over the past four months, hundreds have died. Now, Israelis and Palestinians fear the Feb. 6 election may result in even more violence and bloodshed.

16 The child porn wars

In the case of John Robin Sharpe, the Supreme Court upholds Canada's child pornography laws—but with two exceptions that critics say create a legal loophole for pedophiles.



David Cooper/Vancouver Pro. Xx



Mike Finder for Maclean's

50 He writes, he scores

Mystery, wild antics and *real* hockey have made Roy MacGregor's Screech Owls novels a burgeoning success, with a million copies in print and a forthcoming TV series.

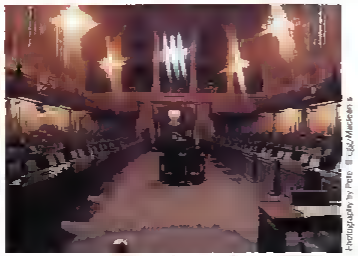
From the

Managing Editor



Reform is in the air—you wish!

The House is back, talk of parliamentary reform is in the air, and MPs, frisky from the hustings, are impatient to flex their muscles. This is not new; it happens after every election. What is new is a sobering survey that shows just how little muscle ordinary MPs have with anyone other than their immediate families (if with them).



Photographs by Pete Ryan/Maclean's

The Commons chamber: no one listens to debates

The nonpartisan Public Policy Forum surveyed two groups of VIP respondents. One was senior executives in corporations across Canada; the other, upper-level officials in federal departments and agencies, from deputy ministers down to directors. Each group was asked to rate the influence over federal decision-making exercised by various participants in that process. First, the bad news. Only 12 per cent of the corporate executives felt members of the House have great or moderately great influence in decision-making (compared with 63 per cent for cabinet ministers and 60 per cent for the prime minister's staff). Now, the worse news. Among the federal officials, MPs stood at just seven per cent. And both groups of respondents said members' influence is in decline. (If there is a ray of light for MPs, it is that they placed ahead of senators, who stood at seven per cent in corporate Canada and a derisory one per cent among federal bureaucrats.)

What, if anything, can MPs do to improve their sorry lot? They face a third-term majority government that has no intention of sharing power with anyone, least of all the wretches on the backbenches, plus an entrenched bureaucracy that thinks (according to the survey) that deputy ministers are as powerful as cabinet ministers. Most proposals for "reform" involve tinkering with the committee system—the battle for influence in the Commons chamber itself having been lost over the past 50 years as ministers stopped paying attention to debates, even those on their own bills. Certainly, any change that would strengthen committees would benefit backbenchers. They need some turf of their own. The power, for example, to review, and to approve or disapprove, appointments to the federal bench and Crown agencies. Or the right (and the funding) to launch their own investigations into matters of their own choosing whenever they wish—subject only to veto by a recorded vote in the Commons.

The plight of MPs can be improved. It won't happen, however, until the Liberal ministry, absolute master of all it surveys, chooses to be nice. Let's not hold our breath.



response@macleans.ca to comment on From the Managing Editor

Newsroom Notes

The second intefadeh

Maclean's London Bureau Chief Barry Came has been covering the turbulent Middle East for 30 years. He has lived in Beirut and Cairo—and visited the region on dozens of occasions. But as Came reports, he has "never glimpsed such despair on both sides of the divide, as profound among the Israelis as it is among the Palestinians" (page 20). Neither camp holds out much hope of a comprehensive settlement, despite the marathon peace talks under way last week between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators in the Egyptian resort town of Taba on the Red Sea. The violence continues, even if it has abated somewhat from the days of what the Palestinians call their second intefadeh—uprising. It has been marked by appalling violations of human rights—Israeli-authorized assassinations, Palestinian firing squads and, at last count, 375 deaths, 318 of them Palestinian. Without an eleventh-hour breakthrough, the prospects for peace are bleak, particularly if, as the opinion polls indicate, Ariel Sharon beats Ehud Barak in the Feb. 6 election for Israeli prime minister. "During the entire time I have been monitoring Israeli-Palestinian affairs," says Came, "Sharon has always been the hardest of the hardliners. He may yet surprise us all. But few are holding out much hope of that."



Came: after 30 years, new depths of despair

BOSS
HUGO BOSS

The Mail

Animal controls

This cover story shows why *Maclean's* is still one of the best magazines around ("Animal wrongs," Covet, Jan. 22). It sheds light on something that Canadians don't really want to believe is happening in our great country. I hope this story will prompt the federal government to pass some effective laws with penalties to protect all defenceless animals. God knows they need it.

Clayton Baumung,
Brandon, Man.



With practically no legislation in place, how in the world are we going to be able to protect animals from people who treat them as a disposable commodity? The treachery of humans never fails to astound or disappoint me.

Tara Whitewood, Toronto

I know people who own cougars, tigers, ravens and many other wild animals. Each of these people does so within the law and because of their love for the particular species, not, as someone in your reports says, as "a fulfilment of someone's ego." While I do agree there are too many animals in the wrong hands, the problem is not merely with exotic animals as pets, it is a problem with the wrong people owning any kind of pet.

Jason Mickie, Charlottetown

In my final year of veterinary medicine, a three-week externship in the exotic animal medicine department at the University of Tennessee opened my eyes to people's inability to care for exotic pets. I saw a four-month-old lion cub die of malnutrition, not because it wasn't fed enough, but because it was fed an inappropriate diet. It was common to have to force-feed one species of python because owners could not adequately mimic its normal environmental conditions. I don't think these owners planned to have a pet they would have to stuff a dead mouse into every two weeks. Veterinarians are not trained to handle these animals, and there is little or no research about the diseases they suffer from or about appropriate drug treatments, dosages or nutritional requirements. We need to think about tighter controls of the animal trade, not only for our protection, but for the protection of the innocent animals as well.

Lorelei Petreny, DVM, Moosomin, Sask.

Your article made it sound as if all green iguanas and Galah cockatoos were caught in the wild, but in fact most are bred in captivity. In the case of the cockatoo, these parrots are netted by the thousands, and farmers take rakes and hoes to them in Australia because they are a threat to their crops. I also have problems with the statement that "salmonella bacteria, including strains resistant to antibiotics, have been found on pets such as turtles, snakes, iguanas and lizards." You forgot to mention that these same strains of salmonella are also commonly found on grocery-store poultry products. Articles that actually educate the public in an unbiased way would be far more beneficial.

James Barbas, Olds, Alta.

Bullying tactics

I would say the school board and staff in Avonmore, Ont., are masters of damage control ("How to react?" Education, Jan. 22). Instead of dealing with the bullies themselves, they seem to have shifted the matter over to the police and courts, thereby excusing their inaction. Your article cited many indications that it was mainly a bully problem, with no indication that the school authorities were dealing with it as such. Some schools employ parents of students as staff monitors, school guards and teacher aids to patrol hallways, washrooms, lunchrooms and playgrounds. Conflict resolution programs show great promise in teaching young people new ways of channelling their anger.

Bob Erickson, North Battleford, Sask.

Back-page morals

If we want to read the disgusting garbage Allan Fotheringham wrote in your Jan. 22 issue, we would subscribe to some girlie magazine. "Ladies' night at the theatre" definitely does nothing to improve *Maclean's*. People wonder

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what is happening to our great country, what with all the violence and crime. If our morals continue to deteriorate, things will only get worse. You are contributing to the problem by publishing such a useless article.
Jenny Pruim, Abbotsford, B.C.

I love Foth, warts and all. In fact, the last page is the first page I look at. And a pox on his detractors.
Leonard P. Stocker, Whitestone, N.Y.

Projecting an image

"Focus, please!" (Business, Jan. 22), on the state of projection in theatres, was inflammatory. To state that "projector bulbs are left to grow dim beyond their rated lifespans" is patently false. At Famous Players we have a strict policy of following the manufacturer's recommendations of bulb life.
John Bailey, Chairman and CEO, Famous Players Inc., Toronto

You quote our technical director as saying that when the Toronto International Film Festival takes over Cineplex Odeon and Famous Players screens we have to overhaul the facilities to make them acceptable. This implies that we are unhappy with them, which is not the case. The theatres we rent from Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon are of a very high standard.
Piers Handling, Director, International Film Festival Group, Toronto

For more letters www.maclean.ca

The highlighted letter in the Jan. 22 issue, from an American resident of Canada complaining about the poor service she receives in her adopted country, quickly filled Maclean's *mailbag with dozens of responses. A sampling:*

American woman

As a Canadian, I suppose I should be insulted by Elizabeth Shaw's letter on the abysmal state of shops and service businesses in Canada ("Inefficient Canada"). Unfortunately, she is absolutely correct, although I think she goes too far in her allusions to the superiority of life in the United States. Canada unquestionably ranks behind in the quality of shops and services. But that's only one aspect of life. We also rank far behind the United States in murders per capita, violence and crime generally. I'll take safe streets and livable cities over good service anytime.
Garry Wood, Toronto

After three years in Toronto, Elizabeth Shaw still can't find her way back to the border? What a shame! I am sure if she asked someone they would gladly put her on the right bus to the States. That is, if she could stop whining about Canada long enough to ask.
Alyuna Gaidart, Tide Head, N.B.

Until I read Elizabeth Shaw's letter, I had no idea what deprivation I was enduring living in Canada. I can understand that it must be a terrible inconvenience for her to be unable to get delivery or services outside the hours of 9 to 5, but I'm really glad I don't have to live in a gated community and can walk in the streets in relative safety. I also couldn't help noticing that she has become Canadianized in at least one respect—she seems to be an excellent whiner.
Joan Hennessey, Morin Heights, Que.

My most sincere hope for Elizabeth Shaw is that she will soon be able to return to live in the United States so she can carry on her desired level of consumerism unimpeded and without the apparent frustration she has experienced while residing in our pretty little country. We kinda like it that we have our differences and have nothing to apologize for.
Donna Ingwersen, Calgary

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Editorial Update

Andrew Phillips



For Maclean's Washington Bureau Chief Andrew Phillips, there's never a dull moment, especially when your stomping grounds encompass the entire United States, with the odd jaunt to Cuba, Haiti and Mexico.

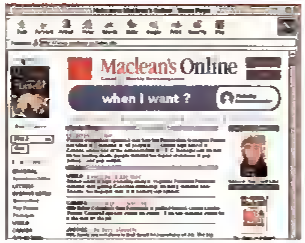
Since joining the magazine in 1986, Phillips has served as Maclean's national editor and London correspondent, as well as a Toronto-based senior editor.

Arriving in Washington in 1996, Phillips' assignments have run the gamut from the execution of a Canadian in Texas to the Pope's historic visit to Cuba. But no topic has figured more prominently than politics, particularly the highs and the lows of Bill Clinton's White House years. And now with a new Republican era dawning, more eyes than ever will be focused on Washington.

"The United States is far and away the most important country in the world, so it's arguably the most important story in the world," says Phillips. "But Canadians get so much American news from so many sources that we have to offer something different. We've made a point of highlighting stories that have particular significance to Canada, and by following Canadians who are making waves south of the border. I've interviewed dot-com entrepreneurs, murderers, social activists and religious fanatics — all of them Canadians making news in the United States."

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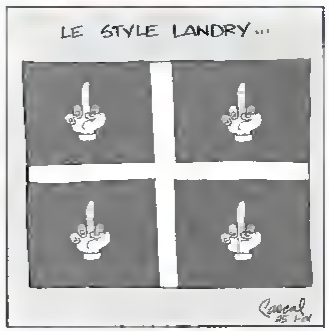
Landry, a new force for national unity?

Over and Under Achievers

So Bernie, about that red rag

News you can snooze by. Cleaning up Landry! Oh, baby, Celine! It's no time to be coy, Roy! And adieu to Alberta!

- **Bernard Landry!:** The Don Cherry of Quebec politics unites federalists *and* sovereignists in disdain. New motto for federalists: "With enemies like him, who needs friends?"
- **Lucien Bouchard:** Say this for Landry's soon-to-be-ex-boss: he was easily humiliated, but never humiliating.
- **Roy Romanow:** After almost a decade as Sask. premier and 30 years of politics, the Big Guy walks off the national stage. Fed-prov conferences won't be the same anymore.
- **The PM:** He wangles an invite to see Dubya at the White House Feb. 5. But will they need an English-to-English interpreter?
- **Celine Dion:** Has a healthy baby boy. Great news—just *please* don't tell us the intimate details.
- **Alberta separatists:** If they *do* get their way, driving from B.C. to Saskatchewan will be so much faster!



La Presse's *Pascal Elie on Landry's Quebec Flag*

OVERBITES

"We are not for sale. Quebec has no intention of streetwalking for a piece of red rag or anything else."

—Quebec deputy premier **Bernard Landry**, in an apparent reference to the Canadian flag, says Quebec won't fly it in exchange for federal funding

"People were furious, furious, furious. They said, 'Can you imagine if **Jean Chrétien** said that about the Quebec flag?' . . . Even sovereigntists said Canada is our main ally, we're not at war with Canada, and we don't want to be."

—**Robert Gillet**, host of Quebec City's top-rated morning radio show

"Quebec must be the only place in the democratic world where citizens cannot freely hoist the flag of their country. Why isn't there a place for the flag of Canada beside Quebec's?"

—**Jérémie Dunn** of St-Hubert, Que., one of many readers of Montreal's *La Presse* newspaper who wrote in to protest Landry's remarks

"I regret that certain people are upset, particularly in English Canada. I apologize for the effect of that choice of words . . . I will try to be polite, moderate and have a better choice of words than I had yesterday. But I will tell [the federal government] what I think about what they are doing."

—Landry apologizes—sort of

Not so *Frank* after all

Here's a worrisome thought for Nova Scotia's business, political and social elite: *Frank* magazine, the satirical Halifax-based scandal sheet, has had it with playing mister nice guy. So, at least, warns **David Bentley**, who, along with **Lyndon Watkins**—a former *Globe and Mail* Report on Business reporter—were the co-publishers and principal shareholders in the biweekly until they sold their shares to staff member **Clifford Boutilier**, the new publisher, last September. "It may gain an edge," says Bentley, 57, who is surrendering his editorial role and stepping down as president of Coltsfoot Publishing Ltd., the magazine's parent company. "We were to some extent a restraining influence on these guys."

Restraint is hardly the kind of description normally reserved for a publication that dishes the dirt on the rich and famous, makes fun of the fat, bald and



Glen Gallant for Maclean's

Bentley (left), Watkins, someone else can get nastier

pompous, and publicizes adulterous affairs and messy divorces. Last year, in fact, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia ordered *Frank* to pay $60,000 to Halifax West MP **Gordon Earle** after he brought a libel suit against the magazine. But that kind of setback hasn't hurt readership in Nova Scotia, where *Frank*'s circulation is around 12,000 and the gossip-laden mag remains a guilty pleasure. (Watkins and Bentley started a central Canadian version of the magazine, published in Ottawa, in 1989, and sold it nine years later to editor **Michael Bate**.) "Nova Scotia is a really wired place," says Bentley, who is not sure what he will do next. "There's an understanding down here that it's people that make the world go round."

John DeMont

OK, *Do* Touch that Dial!



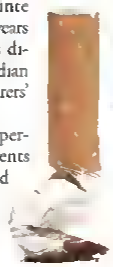
Supertrack

Unless you live in Newfoundland or British Columbia, the odds are that you've been watching less television recently. A study released last week by Statistics Canada showed that TV viewing reached a two-decade low in Canada in the fall of 1999. Canadians watched for an average of 21.6 hours per week, a large drop from the 1988 peak of 23.5 hours. Some other StatsCan findings:

- All age groups and both sexes are watching less.
- Two-thirds of viewing time is spent watching foreign-produced—mostly American-made—programs.
- Newfoundland and British Columbia are the only provinces where TV viewing hours increased. B.C. residents watch an average of 20.7 hours a week—which is actually below the national average. Newfoundlanders (24.5 hours) and French-speaking Quebecers (25.5 hours) spend the most time in front of the set.
- The key reasons for the decline are more time spent moviegoing or on the Internet, and specialty channels that draw viewers away from traditional networks.

No Ifs—or Butts

The mega-city of Ottawa has added a formidable weapon as it prepares to ban smoking in all public places later this year. One of its high-profile hires was **Marie-Josée Lapointe**, a former deputy press secretary under **Brian Mulroney**. More to the point, the vivacious Lapointe spent the past seven years as communications director for the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council.



Now, she'll help persuade Ottawa residents that smoking should be banned from all restaurants and pubs. Lapointe says she'll have no difficulty switching sides. "We never really got involved in the debate over bylaws in municipalities," she says of her time with the tobacco council. The prospect of seeing Lapointe in her new role provoked a chuckle from **David Laundy**, the tobacco council's vice-president for Western Canada. The council's position on smoking bans is it recognizes people shouldn't be unwillingly exposed to second-hand smoke, but feels that goal can be achieved in other ways—such as by proper ventilation. As to Lapointe, said Laundy: "She's a professional—she'll do what she has to."

Julian Beltrame



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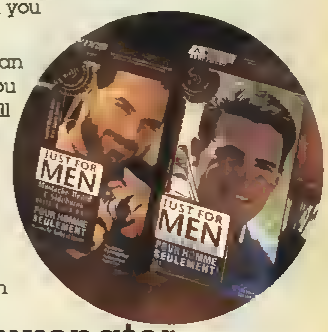
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Over to You
Robert Christy

Life with cerebral palsy

My name is Bob, and I am living a wonderful life as a son, brother, husband, father, father-in-law and grandfather. I have studied at three post-secondary institutions, received bachelor's and master's degrees from two of Canada's top universities, and had a 30-year career with the federal government. But people may want to tell me what's best for me, because I have cerebral palsy. When I was young, I was popular in the community and at school, received high grades through working hard and exercising an agile mind, and did everything other kids my age did. Yet a close relative thought I should have been "destroyed at birth," because of my condition. I'm a raging extrovert, energized by people, and humorous when I am with them. Yet those who paid my salary put me into jobs away from the public eye, doing research and policy writing, refusing me the chance to do the things I could do best. When I didn't shine or meet the potential that those who knew me thought I should achieve, people could justifiably say "What do you expect? He has cerebral palsy."

Among the many people I know from all walks of life are a professor, now dead, who taught in a major Canadian university, an Anglican priest and her spouse, a water resources economist who is listed in *Who's Who*, and my wife, a clergywoman who is one of the leaders of the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. We all have cerebral palsy. I've travelled, stood on the Great Wall in China and cruised down the Yangtze River, through the Three Gorges. I've been on safari, swum in the Indian Ocean and played golf in Kenya. I've walked the beaches of Trinidad, stood in the main square of Lima, driven a car in England, Scotland, Ireland (north and south) and Wales, and prayed at the Western Wall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. I paid for it all myself, through writing contracts, even though I have cerebral palsy.

But now I cry. For the plight of Robert Latimer and his family, who will suffer for 10 long years because in their frustration, ignorance and—grudgingly, I'll say—love, they followed their own pigheadedness, apparently did not listen to the wisdom of others and did not grasp the help that was there for their daughter Tracy, whom he killed because he said he could not stand her pain.

I also weep for the lack of knowledge of people in our so-called high-literacy nation that think cerebral palsy hurts. It doesn't. What hurts is atrophy when muscles are not used as the saying goes, use them or lose them. Physiotherapy and patterning help blood flow and ease any pain. Another thing that hurts is the attitude of others. I weep for the many people who, in their ignorance, think Latimer did the "right thing"—who think, perhaps, that murder, if committed in love to save someone from a "horrible life," is OK if it's a disabled person who dies. Would they feel that way if a person killed another out of love to save the "loved one" from a horrible life as a street person? And I cry for politicians who have forgotten the promises made in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons. They are the ones who could be easily tempted to listen to whoever makes the loudest noise, regardless of right or wrong.

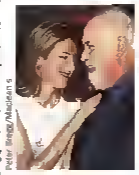
But maybe I cry most of all for me: in spite of my cleverness, diligence and successes now and in future, will I only be judged in a negative, non-flattering way as "Bob, the man with cerebral palsy"?

Christy is a writer and consultant in Ottawa. Guest submissions may be sent to overture@macleans.ca or faxed to (416) 596-7730. We cannot respond to all queries.

Overture

PASSAGES

Born: On Jan. 25 in a West Palm Beach, Fla., hospital, pop superstar **Celine Dion**, 32, had a six-pound, eight-ounce baby boy, **René-Charles**. The baby arrived three weeks before his Valentine's Day due date and the Quebec-born singer was in labour for 14 hours. In 2000, Dion began a sabbatical from recording and performing in order to start a family with her husband-manager, **René Angélil**, 58. She underwent fertility operations and conceived through in vitro fertilization. Dion has said that, in the future, she may retrieve another fertilized embryo she has in storage at a New York City clinic. In a recent interview, she suggested the embryo could be like a "twin" for her son.



Peter Bregg/Maclean's

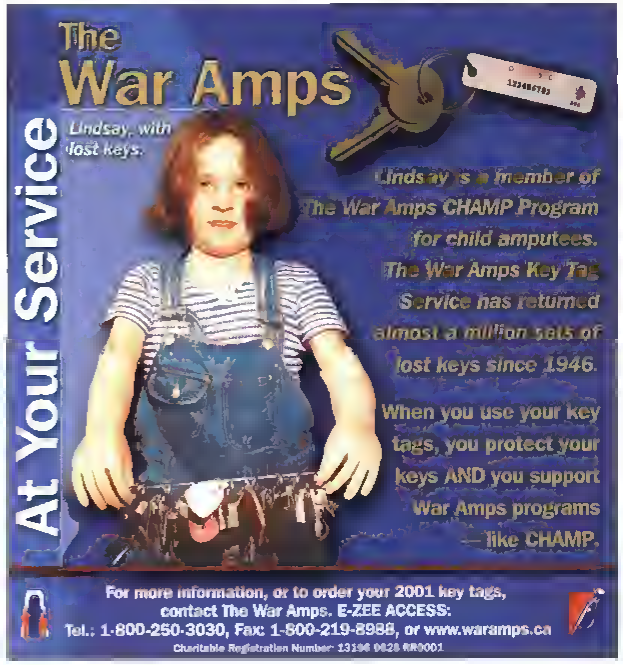
Retired: Swimmer **Joanne Malar**, 25, announced she is leaving the national swim team and will spend the next seven months coaching at the Hamilton-Wentworth Aquatic Club—where she began swimming at age 3. In her 10 years on the team, Malar set four records and won 71 international medals, including golds at the Pan-Am and Commonwealth Games. Malar, a three-time Olympian, said she is proud of her career, despite never winning a medal at the Olympics. In March, Malar will marry **Mike Morreale**, a slotback with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Died: TV and radio personality **Dan Gallagher**, 43, was best known for his work on MuchMusic, first as the host of the *Power Hour*—the station's heavy-metal show—then as the creator and host of an irreverent game show, *Test Pattern*. Gallagher later starred in his own show on the CBC, *Dan Gallagher's Video Hits*. Recently, he hosted radio talk shows in Toronto. Gallagher had been suffering from pneumonia since returning from a trip to Barbados last month. It is thought that Gallagher died in his sleep while recuperating at his Toronto home.

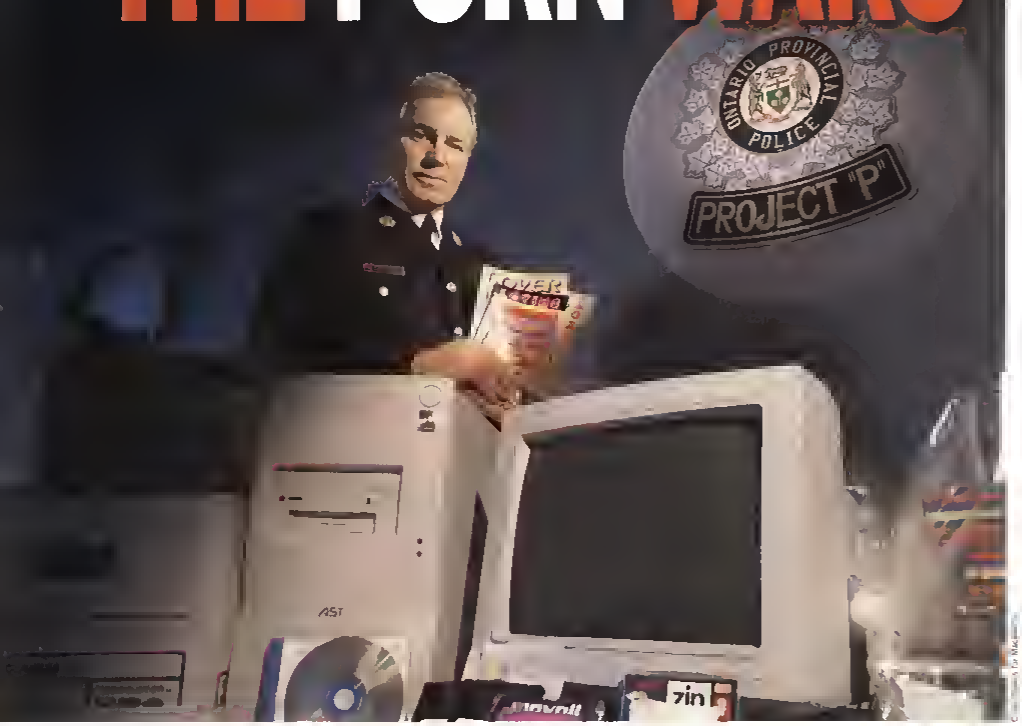
Appointed: Canadian author **David Frum** has been hired by the White House as a speechwriter for President **George W. Bush**. Frum will leave his position as the *National Post* Washington columnist to assist Bush in writing about the economy. The 40-year-old son of the late CBC anchor **Barbara Frum** is also a fellow of the Manhattan Institute—a right-wing U.S. think-tank.

Died: Byron De La Beckwith was tried three times for the 1963 murder of 37-year-old Mississippi civil rights leader **Medgar Evers** before being convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Evers was shot in the back while walking towards his home. The rifle was later found with Beckwith's prints. In Beckwith's first trials, which took place in 1964, two all-white juries deadlocked. In 1994, the known white supremacist, who wore a Confederate flag lapel pin during his trial, was finally convicted. Beckwith, 80, had a history of high blood pressure and heart problems and died at the University Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., after being moved from his prison cell.

Hired: After speculation that he might be named president of Harvard University, former vice-president **Al Gore**, 52, has accepted three part-time teaching positions at American universities. At Columbia University in New York City, Gore will lecture on the relationship between journalists and politicians. Gore was an investigative reporter for *The Tennessean* newspaper in Nashville before embarking on his 24-year political career. He will also teach governance courses at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, his father's alma mater, and Fisk University, the largely black school in Nashville.



THE PORN WARS



By Patricia Chisholm

The irony is that Page believed he was from a "normal" middle-class family. His parents split up when he was 5, but there was always enough money. "Everybody was always trying to buy me stuff," he recalls bitterly, even when he was being sexually abused by his father and neglected by his mother. The Vancouver man, now 19, began working in the city's Boystown—the downtown strip known as a hangout for homosexual prostitutes—at 12. He has made his living as a hooker ever since. Very occasionally, because he needs the money, he allows clients to take pictures—$150 is the standard fee. But usually he refuses, or checks to make sure there are no hidden cameras, a common ploy among his customers. "In the past, I was stupid," he says. "I didn't get asked, they just got taken. Now, my antennae are always up."

Child pornography—almost always associated with other forms of sexual abuse of children—just increases the sense of isolation and worthlessness abused kids feel, Page says. "There's not a lot of choices in kids' minds once they are caught up in abuse, or the sex trade, or drugs," he says. For many, it feels as if life has nothing else to offer. And as far as Page is concerned, governments should do everything they can to stop pedophiles from making, distributing or possessing any form of child pornography. "Anything against kids is so wrong," Page says. "It's ruining their chances. I know that if I hadn't been abused, I would not be in this situation."

But how to fight pornography without infringing on civil rights is a question that has bedevilled authorities, as the case of John Robin Sharpe illustrates. After two years of intense legal wrangling involving four child-pornography charges against the 67-year-old Vancouver resident—a trial, appeal and counter appeal—the Supreme Court of Canada last week decided that a sweeping 1993 law that bans the making, distribution and possession of child pornography is constitutional—although with two controversial exceptions. In a lengthy decision written by Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, six of the judges found that written or visual material made by an individual strictly for his or her own private use is exempt from the possession prohibitions. It also exempted "visual recordings"—legalese for photographs or videotapes—made by an individual for that person's own use, provided the pictures do not depict "unlawful sexual activity" (meaning any of the sexual partners are under age 14). Sharpe must now stand trial on the four charges, two for possession and two for possession with intent to distribute.

The other three members of the court, Claire L'Heureux-Dubé, Charles Gonthier and Michel Bastarache, wrote that the law should be upheld—without the exceptions for private use. Parliament, they wrote in their dissent, had rightfully tried to prevent "the harm that flows from the very existence of images and words which degrade and dehumanize children and to send the message that children are not appropriate sexual partners."

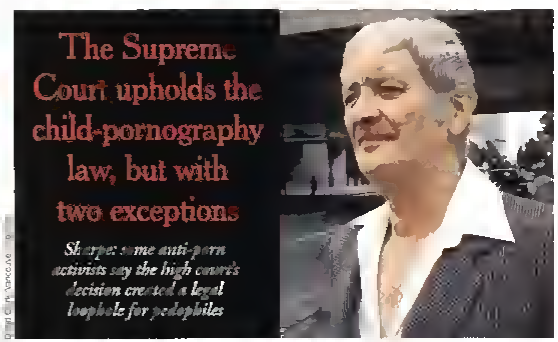
Reaction was swift. Justice Minister Anne McLellan termed the judgment "respectful" of Parliament. She added, however, she would review the decision and the legislation in consultation with her provincial counterparts to decide whether amendments should be made to better reflect the limitations added by the court. Joel Bakan, who teaches constitutional law at the University of British Columbia, called it a "Solomon-like judgment. It's right down the middle. It upholds the law but at the same time meets the criticism that the law is overbroad, by cutting back its scope." Others, however, were not so accepting. Mark Hecht, lawyer for the Winnipeg-based childrens advocacy group Beyond Borders, said the ruling "created a loophole for pedophiles. They've essentially weakened our law. Children are less protected today than they were a year ago."

Parliament enacted Section 163.(1) (4) of the Criminal Code, the section causing the furor, in 1993 because of intense public pressure to curb the stunning proliferation of child pornography. Once an activity mostly confined to clandestine personal meetings between makers and users, pornography grew exponentially on the Internet. The digital highway offers a dream combination for smut peddlers: high accessibility coupled with anonymity. Ontario police estimate that there are thousands of Web sites devoted to distributing explicit pictures and stories of sex with children. They add it is not unusual to unearth private collections of more than 30,000 pictures.

Det. Insp. Bob Matthews, head of the child-pornography unit of the Ontario Provincial Police, says the law's possession provisions are essential to police investigations. "It is much easier to get enough evidence of possession to get a warrant and get our foot in the door that way," he says. "That is when we can uncover evidence of other activity, like making and distribution." The number of investigations could double overnight, he added, and still barely scratch the surface.

The need for broad interpretation of the possession section also had supporters in the legal community. Daphne Gilbert teaches criminal and constitutional law at the University of Ottawa. She agrees with the three judges who concluded that child pornography is so harmful to children that the law prohibiting possession should be extended to include even private forms of expression. "There are enough safeguards in the section to protect people with other motivations, such as artistic expression or scientific research," Gilbert added. "The section does not catch parents who are taking pictures of their children in the bathtub."

For many of the frontline workers who routinely deal with sexually abused children, discussions about the law's finer points can seem out of touch with the brutal realities. Social worker Lisa Marucci runs The Gatehouse, an old, renovated house in Toronto's west end where abused children can tell their stories to police and counsellors in a non-threatening atmosphere. She has found that abusers first try to "groom" children for participation in sexual acts by showing them child pornography. Usually, they are five to eight years old when such activity begins. "Child sexual offenders are very skilled at what they do," Marucci adds. "They work very hard to break down a child's defences: the porn desensitizes them and convinces them that this is normal."



As for the OPP's Matthews, head of Canada's largest child-porn unit, with 14 full-time officers, he said he was very pleased with the Supreme Court's ruling. Even though police continued their investigations, about 40 cases were stalled in the Ontario court system alone awaiting the outcome of the Sharpe decision. Now, he says, their hands are not tied. Still, that is unlikely to help the officers who, Matthews says, frequently fall victim to the stress of their jobs. Many simply can't deal with the thousands of sexually explicit images of children. "It tears your heart out," Matthews sighs, "when you see their faces. When you see that, you know that their innocence is gone forever, and that they will never get it back."

For links
www.macleans.ca



Ken MacQueen photo

Porter on a Mars before it was grounded, taken for granted

Letter from Sproat Lake

Flying on a wing and a prayer

By Ken MacQueen

For 40 years, Sproat Lake, B.C., has served as the fire base for the world's largest water bombers—two magnificent, ungainly winged creatures that suddenly find themselves on aviation's endangered species list. The only surviving Martin Mars flying boats—Second World War-era U.S. navy transports with 61-metre-wide wingspans—are a key part of the aerial fire department for Vancouver Island's forests. They are also a source of pride and comfort in the island's south-central Alberni Valley, and a draw for aviation junkies around the globe. In battle, they are awe-inspiring. Gulping 27,000 litres of water in a single 30-second pass across a lake or ocean, they can drown a young fire in a few bombing runs, saving timber and jobs. "They're spectacular," says Port Alberni Mayor Gillian Trumper. "They're part of the community." But maybe for not much longer.

Washington state-based forest giant Weyerhaeuser Co. Ltd. ended its share of funding last September to Forest Industries Flying Tankers, the consortium that operates the aircraft. The announcement raised fears the Mars will be grounded as museum pieces or sold for scrap. It also set off a firestorm in the community and among the 28 full-time staff who operate and maintain the tankers and a helicopter fleet at Sproat Lake. Disgruntled employees and community members accused Weyerhaeuser of putting B.C. timber and jobs at risk. It has been cutting costs since 1999 when it bought out Vancouver-based MacMillan-Bloedel Ltd., one of the companies that founded Flying Tankers after a run of disastrous fires in the 1950s. Forest companies are responsible for protecting private timber holdings, while the British Columbia Forest Service handles fires on Crown lands. "Fire suppression is just something everyone has taken for granted, until now," says Dave Porter, 51, a flight engineer who worked on the bombers for almost 24 years. "Like any insurance policy, you never want it until you need it, and then if you don't have it, it's too late."

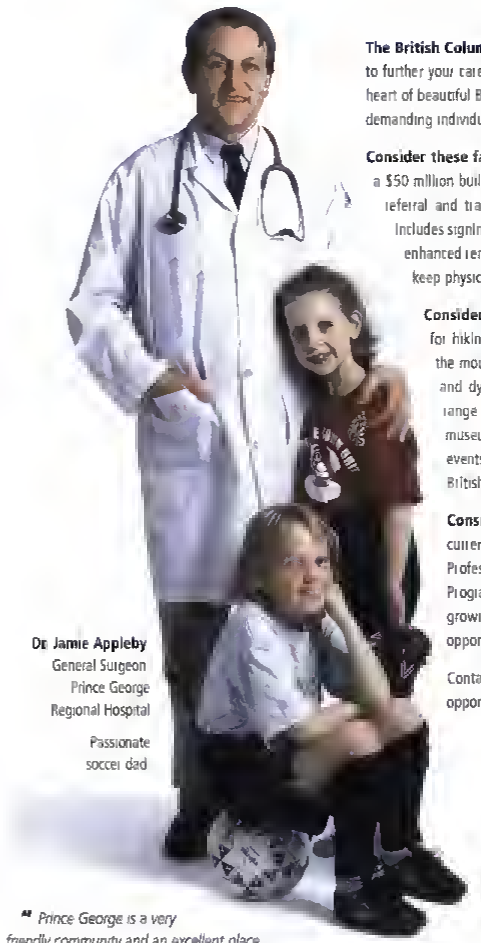
Weyerhaeuser spokeswoman Sarah Goodman says the company has had several years without serious fires on its 1.2 million hectares of Crown and private coastal timberland. She credits this to changes in logging practices, such as a reliance on helicopter logging and an end to slash burning. The helicopters can do double duty as a "more cost-effective" way of dropping water on fires. "It's almost more of an emotional issue than a safety issue," she says of grounding the Mars. Erik Bentsen, senior vice-president TimberWest Forest Ltd., the other partner in Flying Tankers, disputes her claim. Bentsen calls the bombers "two of the most effective aerial attackers for supplying water onto a fire that there are in the world." But TimberWest, which owns 334,000 hectares of forest on Vancouver Island, cannot afford the $2-million annual cost of the flying boats on its own, he adds. Without a reprieve, the Flying Tankers consortium will fold this week.

The Mars flying boats were rescued from the scrap heap once before. The U.S. navy pressed early versions of the plane into service to supply Hawaii after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When the four-plane fleet was retired in the late 1950s, it was bought for a bargain $100,000 after Dan McIvor, then-executive pilot for MacMillan-Bloedel, made the case for their conversion to water bombing. One Mars crashed while fire fighting in 1961, killing all four crew. Another was destroyed ashore by a hurricane in 1962. The two surviving planes have guarded British Columbia's forests ever since.

> Two famous fire-fighting planes may be grounded

Weyerhaeuser has offered to help establish one of the Mars as a museum piece. But Flying Tankers executive director Terry Dixon says they have years of service left. As for cutting them up for scrap, "horrible," he says with a shudder. "It would be like cutting up your kid or something. The outcry in this community would be awesome." m

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED



Dr. Jamie Appleby
General Surgeon
Prince George Regional Hospital

Passionate soccer dad

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Canada Notes



Glee for the return of the missing three

Craig Merkley of Stratford, Ont., and his eight-year-old triplets, Olivia, Gray and Peter, who went missing last October, hug upon their return from Acapulco, Mexico. Merkley's ex-wife, Carline Vandenelsen, the children's non-custodial parent, remained in Mexico awaiting an extradition hearing; she faces abduction charges in Canada. An anonymous tip broke the case.

Setting the standard lower

Loved abroad, flapped over at home, the Canadian flag took a bit of a beating as aspiring Quebec premier Bernard Landry likened it to a "red rag." The front-runner in the race to succeed Lucien Bouchard, the Paris-educated Landry sparked a coast-to-coast contretemps when he spurned $18 million in federal funding for the Quebec City zoo—because it came with the condition that the facility fly the Maple Leaf and post bilingual signs. "Quebec will not prostitute itself for bits of red rag or anything else," said Finance Minister Landry. His comments were roundly condemned across the country—including Quebec, where editorialists and talk-show hosts ran him to ground. Forced to apologize, Landry initially said he was referring simply to the provocative red cloth waved in front of a bull. By week's end, he was issuing "profound regrets" that he had damaged relations with English Canada.

A furor also erupted over the issue of western separatism, with federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion accusing Canadian Alliance Leader Stockwell Day of not doing enough for national unity. On Jan. 22, after two Alliance MPs attended the founding convention of the Alberta Independence Party, Day said he was urging disgruntled westerners to work towards changing the federal government. Dion called on him to take a stronger stand against separatism in the West.



Medicare alive and kicking

Canada's medicare system is healthier than its "enemies" want the public to believe, says a new study by the Tommy Douglas Research Institute. It claims those with an ideological preference for private health care are responsible for many of the myths claiming the system is near collapse. "Certainly, there are major problems affecting our health-care system, but it's not a crisis," said Dr. Michael Rachlis, one of the report's authors. While the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions welcomed the study, the Ontario Medical Association said patients were "just being fooled."

Saskatchewan picks a leader

Former cabinet minister Lorne Calvert became Saskatchewan's 13th premier when he was chosen leader of the provincial New Democrats at a party convention in Saskatoon. Calvert, a 48-year-old former United Church of Canada minister and an MLA since 1986, succeeds Roy Romanow, who announced his resignation last September. Calvert, a father of two, was voted in after four ballots.

Guns and the law

A survey for the Canadian Firearms Registry indicates that 87 per cent of Canada's nearly 2.5 million gun owners have complied with the new gun law. The survey found about two million owners applied for licences before the Jan. 1 deadline, while 140,000 said they intended to disable or divest themselves of their guns, leaving about 320,000 in breach of the law. The National Firearms Association accused the federal government of fudging the figures, saying there are more gun owners and fewer have complied than claimed.

New trial for Ramsay?

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal set aside the conviction of former Mountie and Reform MP Jack Ramsay, 63, for attempted rape in 1969 of a 14-year-old native girl in the remote northern community of Pelican Narrows. The court ruled the judge at Ramsay's 1999 trial did not instruct jurors properly. Saskatchewan Crown officials must still decide whether to go ahead with a second trial.



LOSING HOPE

Israelis and Palestinians alike fear the coming election may spell an end to the peace process

By Barry Came *in Gaza*

Almost every evening, not long after the sun sinks into the Mediterranean Sea off Gaza's sandy shore, the grim serenade begins. The single crack of a rifle shot, echoing across the dunes, heralds its coming on most nights. But sometimes, when there has been a death during the day, it arrives with sudden force: in the rattle of machine-guns, the reverberating boom of tank fire, and the thud and whistle of high-powered explosives tearing through concrete. "Those are the worst nights," says Jihad Abu Khatlah. "The whole sky blazes with tracers and those bright flares that fall on the little parachutes." Not far away, down by the beach on the other side of the electrified fences and the rolls of razor wire, Moshe Saperstein agrees. "It's become such a routine," he says with a grimace, "that when there is no gunfire at night we can no longer get to sleep."



Abu Khatlah and Saperstein are not quite neighbours. But they both live in the Gaza Strip, that benighted sliver of land on Israel's southern coastline that is one of the most densely populated places on the face of the earth. Crammed into the Strip's 360 square kilometres are 1,192,000 Palestinians. More than 600,000 are registered refugees, people like Abu Khatlah, who has spent all but 11 of his 64 years eking out an existence in one of the eight teeming, noisome camps that blot Gaza's landscape. Israelis also inhabit the Strip: some 7,000 Jewish settlers living and working in 18 separate but interconnected agricultural and industrial colonies. Saperstein is one. He and his wife, Rachel, both 60, occupy a pretty bungalow on a sandy knoll in a well-ordered suburb of paved roads, watered lawns and flowering bougainvillea. "It could be such a paradise," sighs Rachel, proudly showing a visitor the view from her living room window, beyond which the Mediterranean sparkles blue in the sunshine.

Neither the Sapersteins nor Abu Khatlah and his family have been enjoying anything even remotely paradisiacal for the past four months. Ever since Ariel Sharon triggered the latest Palestinian intefadeh, or uprising, with his provocative visit last September to a Jerusalem site revered as the Temple Mount by Jews and the Noble Sanctuary by Muslims, the settler couple and the refugee family have been trapped in a kind of hell, enduring long days of near palpable tension, even longer nights of bullet-ridden violence. Both are victims, prisoners of the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships' inability to find a way to live together. But prisoners, as well, of their own enduring national myths and mutual incomprehension. "There will be no peace until the Jews are gone," sobs Abu Khatlah, burying his head in his flowing headdress as he recalls the death of his 26-year old son, killed by Israeli gunfire in the Gaza Strip last Nov. 7. "Our conflict with the Palestinians simply does not have any kind of resolution," declares Moshe Saperstein, his severed arm and blinded eye bearing witness to the rigours of a lifelong battle with his Arab neighbours.



Fighting on the West Bank: a high death toll

The views are extreme. They certainly fail to capture the more moderate sentiments of large numbers of Israelis and Palestinians, most of whom cherish a deep yearning for peace after more than half a century of hostility. But they also reflect the vast gulf that remains to be bridged as Israel and the Palestinians stand on the brink of what may yet be another of the fateful turning points that mark the blood-spattered history of their relationship. On Feb. 6, Israelis go to the polls to elect a prime minister. If the public opinion surveys are correct, Sharon, the 72-year-old unreconstructed hawk of Israeli politics, stands the best chance



Saed Abu Khatlah's family: 'He was lying on the ground'

of winning. As of late last week, all of the polls gave him a 15-percentage-point lead in his race with current Prime Minister Ehud Barak, 58—a still commanding, albeit slightly diminishing, lead. And even the Palestinians admit that a triumph for the intransigent Sharon would in all probability severely, perhaps fatally, wound the unfolding effort to reach a peace agreement. It would, said Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat last week, be "a real disaster."

Barak's prospects for snatching victory from what appears to be looming defeat rest almost solely upon his ability to present Israel's electorate with a program that holds out the promise of a real peace with the Palestinians. The broad outlines of an agreement have been in place for months, ever since the dying days of U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration. Under Clinton's personal tutelage, the Israelis and Palestinians were cajoled into placing all of the key questions, once taboo, onto the negotiating table. They involve some kind of arrangement for Palestinian political control of Arab East Jerusalem, including shared jurisdiction over the Jewish and Muslim holy places within the old city's 16th-century walls.

At issue, as well, is territory, specifically the return to the Palestinians of all but a small portion—between five and seven per cent—of the West Bank and Gaza Strip lands under Israeli military occupation since the 1967 Six-Day War, and where some 200,000 Jewish settlers have established, in clear violation of international law, an intricate web of colonies. Finally, the proposed agreement deals with the four million Palestinian refugees scattered in the occupied territories and overflowing camps around Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. A few, no more than 150,000, would be allowed to return to Israel proper. More would be given the right to return to Palestinian-controlled territory. Most would be offered compensation in lieu of return.

Ironing out those proposals has proved to be beyond the capability, or the willingness, of the Israeli and Palestinian leadership. While Israelis viewed the projected agreement as their most generous offer ever, the Palestinians saw the situation in a far different light. It entailed the abandonment of their long held position, endorsed in a host of United Nations resolutions, that envisages Israel withdrawing to its pre-1967 boundaries, dismantling all the settlements and, if not permitting the return of all Palestinian refugees, at least acknowledging Israel's role in creating the refugee problem in the first place.

Beyond that, Arafat and his entourage viewed with a jaundiced eye exactly what was on offer. "They claim to be giving us 90 or 95 per cent of the West Bank, but take a close look at their maps," says Ghassan Khatib, a former Palestinian negotiator, currently lecturing in political studies at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah. "The Israeli settlements that remain will isolate East Jerusalem and cut the West Bank in half with a line of settlements that run from Jerusalem down to the Jordan River. The Jordan Valley remains in their hands for some time to come. What is more, they have taken all the best land with the best water. We end up with a truncated state divided into three or four pieces that would not really be viable."

Initially, Arafat attempted to line up support for his recalcitrant policy among the Arab states. But that campaign failed to produce anything more than lip service to his cause. "Only Saddam Hussein in Iraq has any real interest in prolonging the conflict," argues one European ambassador in Israel. "In Egypt, [President] Hosni Mubarak wants him to cut a deal, as do all of the oil-rich sheiks down in the [Persian] Gulf. The last thing King Abdullah in Jordan wants to see is a Palestinian army on his borders down in the Jordan Valley. He'd prefer an international force, failing that the Israelis. Even the Syrians would not be averse to a deal, if they are not willing to say so publicly. Syrian President Bashar Assad knows full well that his army is in bad shape. There have been no spare parts for the Syrian air force for a decade. He'd probably lose all his warplanes in the first day of any real shooting war."

If Arafat was reluctant to negotiate, it was Sharon who provided him with the excuse not to. When Sharon decided to take his stroll around the Temple Mount, below which sits the Wailing Wall, he set a match to smouldering Palestinian resentment. Years of almost daily humiliation under the heel of a none-too-gentle military occupation finally erupted in another intefadeh. The costs so far have been heavy: close to 5,000 injured and 375 dead, the vast majority Palestinians. The Israel Defense Forces have earned an international black eye for permitting, if not actually authorizing, the use of excessive force in putting down street demonstrations that are largely, though not completely, the work of rock-throwing youngsters. Economic life in the Palestinian-controlled areas has skidded to an abrupt halt. "The Palestinian Authority is basically broke," says a Western diplomat who monitors Palestinian affairs. "All the municipalities are now bankrupt and the PA itself is existing on a line of credit from the European Union." Countless victims are entangled in the midst of this sorry state of affairs, among them Ihnaid Abu Khatlah and Moshe and Rachel Saperstein.

Mouth-watering aromas of a shabbat meal under preparation waft through the Sapersteins' tidy bungalow in Neve Dekalim in southern Gaza. They are driving Moshe to distraction. A large

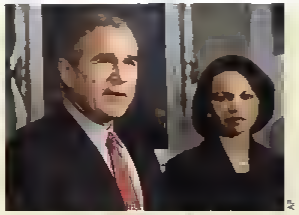


Arafat; Barak (right) with cabinet minister Shimon Peres: a bloody history

HEADACHE FOR A NEW PRESIDENT

When Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met last week in the Egyptian resort of Taba, there was one major difference from earlier attempts to resolve their conflicts. No one was looking over their shoulders. For months, while Bill Clinton pushed and prodded them towards a peace agreement, U.S. negotiators were along every step of the way. But with George W. Bush newly installed in the White House, Washington took a big step back. Suddenly, the two sides are on their own.

During Clinton's final 18 months in office, he turned a deal between the Israelis and Palestinians into something of a personal crusade. He visited the region six times, presided over four Mideast summits in one year, and invited Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to the White House more often than any other foreign leader. But conservative critics accuse him of "legacy-hunting"—pushing the parties further than they could go without losing support among their own people, in order to secure his place in history. "The failure was due, to a certain extent, to his own egotism," says Robert Kagan, an analyst with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "He was looking to his own legacy."



Bush with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice: shifting priorities

The new Bush administration seems to have taken those sentiments to heart. Things would be different even if Clinton were still in office, until the outcome of the Feb. 6 Israeli election is clear, any progress in peace talks is unlikely. And Bush, as a foreign-policy neophyte, is in no position to do the kind of one-on-one arm-twisting that Clinton came to enjoy. "In foreign policy there are situations that require the personal touch of the president," says Stephen Zunes, a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco. "Frankly, the new president doesn't have the knowledge to do that."

At the same time, Bush's team has signalled that it has other priorities in the Middle East and does not want to focus so much effort on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Bush advisers say more attention should be paid to overall stability in the region, and intend to strengthen U.S. ties with major Arab countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Still, the failure of Clinton's peace efforts may have left the region more volatile than ever, and a bigger headache for his successor.

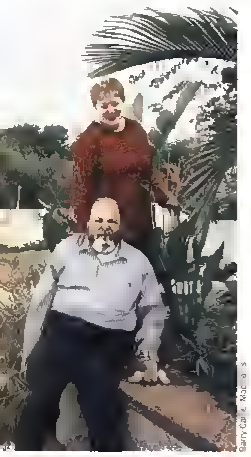
CENTURY OF CONFLICT

- **Nov. 2, 1917:** Britain issues the Balfour Declaration, calling for a Jewish state in Palestine
- **1924-1939:** Waves of Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Europe swell the Jewish population in Palestine.
- **Nov. 29, 1947:** The United Nations, reacting in part to the Holocaust, partitions Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.
- **May 14, 1948:** Israel declares sovereignty, and the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq invade Palestine. War rages for 19 months.
- **Dec. 11, 1949:** The United Nations adopts a resolution allowing the 800,000 Palestinian refugees who fled the war to return.
- **Oct. 29, 1956:** Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal and provokes the Suez Crisis. Israeli troops fight alongside those from France and Britain.
- **May 29, 1964:** The Palestine Liberation Organization is formed in Jerusalem.
- **June 5, 1967:** Israel defeats Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the Six-Day War, leaving it in control of Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai.
- **Feb. 3, 1969:** Yasser Arafat is named PLO chairman.
- **Oct. 6, 1973:** Egypt and Syria invade Israel simultaneously on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. The war ends 20 days later with Egypt and Syria recovering some territory lost to Israel in the Six-Day War.
- **Nov. 22, 1974:** The United Nations recognizes the right of Palestinians to statehood.
- **Sept. 17, 1978:** Israel and Egypt sign the Camp David Peace Accords.
- **June 6, 1982:** In an attempt to destroy the PLO, Israel invades Lebanon.
- **Dec. 9, 1987:** The Palestinian uprising known as the intefadeh begins as a riot in the Jebaliya refugee camp and lasts six years.
- **Sept. 13, 1993:** Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat sign the Oslo Peace Accords, outlining autonomous zones for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.
- **Oct. 26, 1994:** Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein sign a peace treaty.
- **Jan. 20, 1996:** Arafat wins the first Palestinian election since the formation of Israel.
- **May 24, 2000:** The Israeli military withdraws from southern Lebanon after 22 years of occupation.
- **July 11, 2000:** U.S. President Bill Clinton hosts Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Arafat at Camp David, but talks collapse over the issue of controlling Jerusalem.
- **Sept. 28, 2000:** Likud leader Ariel Sharon visits a Jerusalem site holy to Muslims and Jews, sparking a wave of violence that continues almost daily.

Michael Snider

man of more than ample girth, he is on the 12th day of a hunger strike, staged by a group of 39 settlers in Jerusalem's Zion Square to protest Barak's declared intention to dismantle the colonies in Gaza as part of a peace agreement. "We come home on the weekends," he says, eyeing the kitchen, "when we are finally allowed to eat."

Moshe and Rachel are natives of New York City. They immigrated to Israel in the wake of the 1967 war, when Israel's armies drove the Egyptians out of the territory where their home now stands. "We were 27 years old," says Rachel, "very young and very idealistic." For 30 years, they taught school in Jerusalem, raising three daughters before retiring to Gaza—"out of religious obligation"—three years ago. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Moshe lost his right arm and right eye in the fighting at Ismailia on the Suez Canal. If the memory rankles, he betrays no sign of it. "I'm always misplacing things," he grins, waving the stump of an arm that is severed just below the shoulder. "In the army," he adds, "I managed to attain a rank that I think is unique in military history. I was a sub-private."



The Sapersteins: 'Our conflict simply does not have any kind of resolution'

The humour quickly vanishes, however, when the conversation turns to his presence on territory confiscated by military force from previous inhabitants. "We're not interlopers here," he counters. "Gaza has the longest continuous Jewish presence in the Holy Land. Until 1929, when the Arabs drove the Jews out, we had been in Gaza for more than 1,600 years." Would he leave if it was required under a peace agreement with the Palestinians? "If it was a real peace, I think most of us would grumble under our breaths, but we would eventually depart." Rachel quickly intervenes. "Not me!" she vows. "They'd have to come in here and drag me out by the hair!"

Neither of the Sapersteins has much regard for the Palestinian leadership, nor much hope for the peace talks between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators that concluded at week's end in the Egyptian resort town of Taba on the Red Sea. "Arafat's a thug," says Moshe. "As far as that crowd's concerned, there will never be an end to these troubles until all the Jews are gone." Rachel gestures out of her living room window, down towards the beach where, two days earlier, Roni Tzalach, a 32-year-old local settler, had been murdered. "They killed poor Roni right there," she says. "Shot him in the head. That's the kind of people they are. All they know is killing and terror. There's been nothing but trouble in Gaza ever since our government let Arafat and his gang of mafia come back from Tunis. And now, we're all locked up, living behind fences, like a jail."

Ihnaid Abu Khatlah is imprisoned as well, but in conditions far more onerous than those endured by the Sapersteins. He lives in the Palestinian refugee camp at Rafah in the extreme southern end of the Gaza Strip, within sight of the watchtowers that guard the border with Egyptian Sinai. It is a crowded, noisy, malodorous place, a warren of unpaved alleys and low houses fashioned of raw concrete blocks with corrugated metal roofs. Abu Khatlah occupies one of those houses, three square rooms surrounding a courtyard. He has been there for most of his life, long enough to sire three sons.

"We came to this area in 1948," he says, "after the Jews drove my family out of Beersheba, where we had lived for generations. We're farmers. We had 80 dunums [one dunum equals about eight hectares] of land in Beersheba." He stands in his doorway, head wrapped in traditional kaffiyeh as well as, incongruously, a scarf, and points down to the Mediterranean, beyond a detachment of Israeli troops dug into a fortified bunker. "We also had 40 dunums on the coast. So we came here to get away from the fighting. I was 11 at the time. I did not think then that I would be here so long."

For years, Abu Khatlah used those 40 dunums to provide a living for his wife and his growing sons. He raised poultry and potatoes and managed a grove of olive trees. Two years ago, the Israeli authorities confiscated 22 of his 40 dunums. "They had no right to do that," he says. "I had deeds to the land, registered from the time of the Turks." Still, Abu Khatlah and his sons somehow lived off the vastly reduced proceeds from their diminished lands. But last Nov. 7, disaster struck. "It was around 8 p.m.," Abu Khatlah recalls. "I was with Saed, my second son. We had finished work, but I stayed behind to tend to the chickens. Saed set off for home when I suddenly heard shots, coming from the Israeli bunker. I ran to Saed but he had been hit. He was lying on the ground. There were wounds in his stomach, blood everywhere. I did not know what to do."

Abu Khatlah's eldest son, Mohammed, 32, soon arrived on the scene. "I could see the fire coming from the Israelis in the settlement at Bedolah," he recounts. "I did not know it was my brother who had been shot, but I knew that both he and my father were in the area where the Israelis were shooting." Mohammed and his father, assisted by neighbours, managed to transport Saed to hospital. But he died hours later, three 7.62-mm gunshot wounds in his abdomen. He was 26, husband of a 24-year-old pregnant wife, father of Shadi, a two-year-old boy. One month ago, Saed's widow, Fatmah, gave birth to her second child, a daughter, named Shadiya.

The precise chain of events that led to Saed Abu Khatlah's death will likely never be known. Not will those of many of the others who have perished since the Palestinian uprising began last September. One major reason is that, unlike in the last intefadeh, Israeli military police investigations of fatal shootings by soldiers are no longer mandatory because the army now legally defines the situation as an armed conflict. Despite the high death toll, only five military police investigations have been carried out. "It's created a very dangerous situation," says David Holly, a retired British Royal Artillery officer, currently studying for a doctorate in war studies at King's College, University of London.

Holly, who served in Bosnia, was hired by Amnesty International to conduct a military investigation in January into the widespread claims by human-rights organizations and others that the Israelis were using excessive force. After touring Israeli and Palestinian territories, and talking to Israel Defense Forces lawyers, Holly claims to have found evidence to support the charges, especially at the hot spots in the Gaza Strip. "Call it a soldier's instinct," Holly remarks, "but I have a gut feeling that something went terribly wrong in Gaza. It might have something to do with a breakdown in the chain of command, or NCOs looking the other way, or frightened 18-year-old conscripts in a scary situation. But if soldiers are not punished for indisciplined actions, sooner or later they're going to get the message that it's all right to kill Palestinians."

'Only Iraq has any interest in prolonging the conflict'

The situation is not likely to improve under any government headed by Sharon, who has a well-earned reputation for fostering military indiscipline, both on his own part and on the part of those under his command. Many moderate Israelis were pinning virtually all their hopes on the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that were suspended on a note of surprising optimism last week in Taba, just across the border from the Israeli resort of Eilat. All of the leading proponents of peace in both camps participated in the talks, which are now scheduled to resume after the election. "We have never been closer to a peace agreement," said Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami. It all may, however, be too late in the day to save Ehud Barak's hold on the prime ministership. And if he loses his job next week, the faint hope for an early end to Israel's torment may well go with him. m

HIGH-SCHOOL FEARS

Ariel Sharon may be enjoying a double-digit lead in public opinion polls, but there is one sector of Israeli society that remains immune to his attraction. Among those who fear they will soon have to fight in the wars Sharon is so fond of waging, Likud's prime ministerial candidate has consistently fared second best in his contest with the current prime minister, Ehud Barak. That, at least, is the message that many are reading into the results of mock elections held in Israel's high schools. In school after school across the country, Barak has soundly trounced Sharon. Last week at Blich High School in Tel Aviv's suburbs, 76 per cent of the school's 968 Grade 11 and 12 students cast ballots. Barak won 58 per cent of the vote; Sharon 42 per cent.

The mock votes in Israel's high schools are taken seriously by the pollsters, the media and the candidates themselves, and nowhere more than at Blich in suburban Ramat Gan, where Israel's diamond trade is concentrated. Both Sharon and Barak paid high-profile campaign visits to the school, trailed by a noisy entourage of party workers, press and jostling photographers. The politicians' motives are not hard to discern. Blich's mock elections have long been regarded as a bellwether of Israeli voters' intentions. Only once in the past 30 years have Blich's students failed to correctly pick the winner in the national contests.

In an otherwise flagging campaign, Barak and his team have been understandably buoyed by the results in the high schools. "We won here because our young generation know that only Barak's peace policies can guarantee our future," Labour party secretary general Raanan Cohen told Blich's students after the vote, urging them to persuade their parents to vote for Barak as well.

While the high-school students challenged Barak regarding his concessions to the Palestinians, they gave Sharon an even more uncomfortable ride. His worst moment occurred, again last week, at Eshel Hamassi school in Beersheba, when Ilil Komai, 16, rose from an audience to castigate Sharon for dragging Israel into war with Lebanon. "My father was in that war and saw many of his friends killed," she said, nervously biting her lip. "My father recovered from shell shock without drugs. I accuse you of having caused me suffering for more than 16 years. I accuse you of having caused my father suffering for more than 16 years. I accuse you of many things because you caused a great deal of suffering. I don't think you can now be elected prime minister." Sharon, clearly taken aback, had no ready reply.

B.C.



Israeli soldiers carrying a dead Palestinian: savage violence



Sharon campaigning promising a tougher stance

World Special Report

The hawk circles

Palestinians call him the Butcher of Beirut—a man blamed for shedding more Arab blood than any other Israeli. Ariel Sharon, the 72-year-old former defence minister and commando, earned their hatred in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon. Sharon sent Israel's Lebanese Christian allies, the Phalangists, into Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps to clean out Palestinian fighters. But the militiamen, thirsting for revenge after the assassination the day before of their leader, Bashir Gemayel, massacred nearly 800 refugees, including women, children and old people. Now, opinion polls suggest the portly, white-haired warhorse will be elected prime minister of Israel on Feb. 6—and he has again outraged Palestinians with his vow to take a far tougher stance in peace negotiations.

It was Sharon's visit on Sept. 28 to the Jerusalem site revered by Jews as Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary that sparked the ensuing uprising that has left nearly 400 people dead and crippled the Middle East peace process. Sharon's peace plan offers only one major concession: to not reconquer the Palestinian cities Israel handed back to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as part of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. A Sharon government would cede no more territory, refuse to dismantle Jewish settlements and keep the whole of Jerusalem. Though he would establish no new settlements in the occupied territories, he would expand existing ones. In return, the Likud leader would grant the Palestinians sovereignty over 42 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (which, coincidentally, is how much they currently control). Arafat's

> Ariel Sharon is poised to become the next Israeli prime minister

officials have summarily rejected Sharon's proposal. "We will never accept this," said Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo. "It is a sure recipe for war."

Sharon is just as hawkish today as he was in 1953 when he led his commandos on a reprisal raid into the Palestinian village of Qibya. They blew up 45 houses to avenge the murder of a Jewish woman and her two children. By the time they were finished, they had killed more than 60 villagers, half of them women and children.

As chief of Southern Command in the late 1960s, Sharon ruthlessly demolished thousands of homes in the seething Gaza refugee camps. And following the slaughter in Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, an Israeli commission, headed by Supreme Court president Yitzhak Kahan, censured Sharon for "having disregarded the danger of acts of vengeance against the population of the refugee camps." After Prime Minister Menachem Begin threatened to fire him, Sharon resigned—although he remained in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio.

In his 1989 memoirs, *Warrior*, Sharon projected himself as a planner and a pragmatist. As a member of Begin's government, he masterminded the expansion of Jewish settlements in the Arab hill country of the West Bank. But it was the same Sharon who persuaded Begin to relinquish settlements in the Sinai in exchange for a peace treaty with Egypt.

Yet Sharon was, and remains, a Zionist who believes in the Jews' absolute right to the whole of the ancient biblical homeland. He refuses to shake hands with Arafat. He was both patriot and pragmatist during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Called up at age 45 as a reserve divisional commander, he quarrelled constantly with his fellow generals. Yet it was Sharon who planned and executed the strike across the Suez Canal that turned the tide for Israel.

In 1973, he jumped into politics, rising to the post of defence minister in 1981. At the outset of the Lebanon war, Israeli tanks were supposed to stop after clearing out Palestinian gunmen across Israel's northern border. Instead, they rolled on almost 100 km to the gates of Beirut, and the Phalangists rampaged through the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Sharon's critics contend he had always planned it that way. Fuelling the ongoing debate, Yitzhak Berman, who resigned as Begin's energy minister in protest at the expansion of the war, wrote a year ago in the liberal daily *Ha'aretz* that Sharon told the cabinet four times that the invasion would be halted 40 km inside Lebanon. "Begin believed in him," Berman explained. "The nation was induced to collectively shut its eyes." Is history about to repeat itself?

Eric Silver *in Jerusalem*

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Galapagos fuel spill arrest

As workers raced to save contaminated animals and birds, authorities arrested the captain of a leaking tanker that ran aground near the Galapagos Islands, renowned for their unique wildlife. Officials claimed the Jessica, carrying 700,000 litres of diesel fuel, ran aground after Capt. Tarquino Arevalo mistook a signal buoy for a lighthouse.

Fiery death in Beijing

In a suicide attempt that left one man dead, five Falun Gong followers doused themselves with gasoline and set themselves ablaze in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Sect members have been defying a government ban on Falun Gong, which has attracted millions of followers with a mix of meditation and exercise.

In search of immortality

Nearly 70 million Hindu worshippers travelled to the northern Indian city of Allahabad to swim in the Ganges as part of the six-week-long Maha Kumbh Mela, or Great Pitcher Festival. The faithful believe bathing in the river will give them immortality.

Following his father to power

Joseph Kabila, 31, was sworn in as president of Congo 10 days after his president father, Laurent, was gunned down by a bodyguard. Kabila pledged to unite the civil war-ravaged country.

Legal quagmire for twins

Aaron Wecker, the biological father of twin daughters adopted twice via the Internet, was awarded temporary custody by a St. Louis judge, on the same day a British court ruled the girls should remain in England. Born in St. Louis in June, they were adopted by a California couple, who paid $9,025. But the mother, Tranda Wecker, reclaimed the twins and sold them to a British couple for $18,050.

Nigerian girl lashed

Despite international protests, a Nigerian girl guilty of having premarital sex was publicly flogged. Bariya Magazu, 17, received 100 lashes by cane, but said her father forced her to have sex with the man who impregnated her.


Photo: Jitesh AP

A catastrophic earthquake in India

Crowds gathered outside a collapsed building in Ahmedabad, India, after the country was rocked by the most powerful earthquake to hit the region in half a century. At least 15,000 people were feared killed and thousands more injured. The quake also claimed lives in neighbouring Pakistan.

End of the road for the deadly seven

The Texas Seven—a gang of murderers, rapists and violent robbers—vowed never to give up. Led by George Rivas, 30, they fled Connally Unit, a high-security prison in Kenedy, Tex., near San Antonio on Dec. 13, stealing handguns and rifles as they left. And on Christmas Eve, they allegedly killed a Dallas-area police officer during the robbery of a sporting-goods store from which they stole more weapons and cash.

Purchasing a mobile home, they made their way to Coachlight Motel and RV Park in Woodland Park, Colo., a bedroom community in the mountains near Colorado Springs. But police received a tip from an informant who had seen the seven on the TV show *America's Most Wanted*. Four of the men gave up when surrounded, but a fifth killed himself. Two days later, the final two surrendered at a nearby motel, but only after making a public statement in which they criticized the Texas penal system. If convicted of the police officer's murder, all could face the death penalty.

Chrétien beats Fox to Washington

After hinting that the first foreign leader he would receive would be Mexican President Vicente Fox, U.S. President George Bush changed his mind in the face of intense lobbying from Canada and will meet with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on Feb. 5. Bush still intends to visit Fox on Feb. 16, but the President's decision to meet Chrétien first is seen as recognition of the importance of the Ottawa-Washington relationship. Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley also became the first foreign minister received by Secretary of State Colin Powell when the two met last week to discuss Bush's plans for a missile-defence program.

Mission Critical

Team Canada sets off for China amid doubts about Ottawa's trade road shows

By Mary Janigan



Chrétien cycles through Shanghai in 1994: an insider says the PM is 'obsessed' with his creation

Tim Hipwell, CP

His firm has no flashy consulting contracts to sign during next week's high-powered trade mission to China, but David Stregger would not dream of missing it. The president of Winnipeg-based Teshmont Consultants Inc. figures the trip is the perfect chance to extol his company's expertise in high-voltage electrical transmission. And China is just starting to connect its sprawling network of regional power grids. Stregger's company has had ample experience in China since 1983. But centralized authorities still approve power sector decisions in China. And Stregger believes it will be far easier to meet those authorities when he is tagging along with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. "It keeps up our visibility," he says. "If we *weren't* on this, they would wonder if we were still interested in pursuing work. And we definitely are."

In the cutthroat world of international trade, Team Canada has become Ottawa's key weapon to pry open doors for timid Canadian exporters. In seven years, Chrétien, provincial premiers and hundreds of business executives have made five trips halfway around the world, flogging Canadian expertise everywhere from Southeast Asia to South America. Now the Prime Minister, nine of the 10 provincial premiers, the three territorial leaders and more than 500 business executives are heading to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong from Feb. 9 to 18.

Yet for all the enthusiasm, some critics are asking uneasy questions about Team Canada's exalted place in the nation's trade strategy. They worry that its high-profile missions to far-flung nations are in danger of becoming a substitute for a real strategic trade plan. And they seriously question the effectiveness of these trips when in only one case—China's—has the portion of Canadian exports sold to a visited country increased significantly after the mission. Nor has investment in Canada from these nations improved.

China was Team Canada's first destination in November, 1994. And, to be sure, Canada's third-largest trading partner remains a natural target for a sales team. Its economy is booming. Canada also wants to reinforce its bilateral ties before China joins the 140-nation World Trade Organization, probably later this year. Chrétien and the premiers will suggest that Canada would be a wonderful place to set up manufacturing operations to take advantage of the freer U.S. market. Canadian firms will extol the goods and services they can provide to a nation that is updating its antiquated infrastructure to attract trade and investment. Some will even offer legal expertise in dealing with the WTO treaty. "There are very good predictions that within 20 years, China will be the No. 2 economy in the world," says Earl Drake, former Canadian ambassador to China and president of the Canada-China Business Council. "We need to be part of that. We need to get in on the ground floor."

That sense of urgency has kept the mission alive through a season of political turmoil. It was originally scheduled for last November to mark the 30th anniversary of Canada's decision in 1970 to open diplomatic relations with China. That was a bold move at a time when the United States still insisted that Taiwan was the legitimate Chinese government. But it was postponed when Chrétien called the Nov. 27 federal election. Since then, trade officials have scrambled to revive it. The only political casualty is Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, who had to cancel because he will likely go to the polls this spring. But officials have managed to reschedule meetings for Canadian executives with potential clients and partners. "It really does open doors," International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew told *Maclean's*. "It's a formula that calls a lot of attention to our country—and gives a lot of credibility to our businesses."

Still, critics worry that Team Canada has become, in trade terms, the defining feature of Chrétien's time in office. Former B.C. premier Michael Harcourt first raised the idea of a federal-provincial sales team during a First Ministers' meeting in 1993, and, as a former trade minister, the Prime Minister embraced it. "This is his baby," says an insider. "And this *is* our trade policy. That is why he is so obsessed with it."

Yet according to Statistics Canada, the missions have had virtually no impact on Canada's exports to targeted nations or foreign direct investment from them. From 1994 to the first 11 months of last year—the most recent period for which figures are available—the value of Canada's exports to the United States increased from 81 per cent to 87 per cent of all exports—although it was not a Team Canada target. Among the team's 13 destinations, the only, and slight, success story is China, during that period, the value of Canada's exports has inched up from half a percentage point of total exports to nine-tenths of a percentage point.

In examining the other 12 nations, *Maclean's* used the Statistics Canada data to compare exports in the year of the mission with the first 11 months of last year. Exports to 10 nations declined as a proportion of all exports. Exports to Chile, which Team Canada targeted in January, 1998, remained the same. Exports to Mexico edged up one one-hundredth of a percentage point. In most cases, the dollar value of the exports also dropped.

The picture for foreign direct investment in

TRADING DOWN

Despite all the hoopla, Team Canada missions have made little visible impact on trade between Canada and most target countries. This chart compares the percentage of Canada's total exports bought by those countries in the mission year and in the first 11 months of 2000

COUNTRY	MISSION DATE	% OF TOTAL CANADIAN EXPORTS THAT YEAR	% OF TOTAL EXPORTS, JAN.–NOV., 2000	TREND
CHINA	Nov. 1994	0.52%	0.91%	▲
INDONESIA	Jan., 1996	0.35	0.18	▼
MALAYSIA	Jan., 1996	0.2	0.1	▼
INDIA	Jan. 1996	0.13	0.12	▼
PAKISTAN	Jan., 1996	0.03	0.02	▼
SOUTH KOREA	Jan., 1997	1.02	0.55	▼
THAILAND	Jan., 1997	0.16	0.09	▼
PHILIPPINES	Jan. 1997	0.14	0.09	▼
MEXICO	Jan., 1998	0.46	0.47	▲
BRAZIL	Jan., 1998	0.43	0.25	▼
CHILE	Jan., 1998	0.11	0.11	◆
ARGENTINA	Jan., 1998	0.11	0.06	▼
JAPAN	Sept., 1999	2.36	2.19	▼

Source: Statistics Canada



Stregger in China, Team Canada 'keeps up our visibility'

Canada was equally disappointing. Between 1994 and 1999, the value of U.S. investment went from 66 per cent to 72 per cent of the total. Chinese investment dropped from 0.15 per cent to .08 per cent. In the few other cases where data were available, FDI declined—with the sole exception of Brazil, where FDI remained the same.

Few trade missions ever yield an immediate sales bonanza. But the Prime Minister's Office has established a dubious method of judging each mission's success by tallying the value of the deals—and trumpeting the results. Such inflated expectations can never be fulfilled, if only because the number includes everything from contracts signed before Chrétien's arrival to letters of intent that never materialize. As well, many deals fell apart when Asian and Latin American economies lost strength during the dramatic currency crises of the late 1990s. On the 1997 mission to South Korea, Charles Kim, president of Vancouver-based Trans-Pac Fibre Inc., signed a $14-million joint-venture agreement to erect a lumberyard with Dae Sung Lumber Ltd. of Seoul. That deal evaporated in 1998 when his partner went into receivership. "When you look at the direct benefits, I don't think there are many," Kim says. "But if you are travelling with the head of the country, your firm has more credibility—and you get more exposure."

'We will have to decide where to put our jelly beans'

But a government leader cannot be everywhere. Critics contend that Canada's efforts at trade promotion should be more discriminately focused. Why have previous missions devoted so much effort to nations such as the Philippines, where the value of Canada's exports constitute less than one-tenth of a percentage point of total exports? Why not concentrate on such nations as the members of the Mercosur customs union—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay—where exports remain slight but the growth potential is huge? Why not work to extend the North American Free Trade Agreement to these nations? "The reality of our trade is North America," argues Alan Alexandroff, research director at Toronto's Munk Centre for International Studies. "That is where Canadian companies are investing. That is where we are doing the bulk of our trade. With limited resources, we are going to have to decide where to put our jelly beans."

Others contend that the department's resources and Chrétien's clout could be better used to clear away legal impediments to trade. "Government would do far better for us by sitting down with the politicians in those countries," argues Brian Lee Crowley, president of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies. "They should be hammering down the trade barriers that are actually the obstacle to our people doing business."

Still, most experts, including the Munk Centre's Alexandroff, concede the China mission is useful because close ties still exist between that country's government and business sector. And opportunities abound. SNC-Lavalin International Inc. of Montreal will likely sign a contract to do a feasibility study on the extension of the Beijing mass transit system. Edmonton-based Lockerbie Stanley Inc. wants to boost its chances of getting two contracts to design and build wastewater treatment plants. "We meet people that we might never meet on our own," says vice-president Robert Pitour.

Given such benefits, most experts do not want to disband Team Canada. they want to make it part of a more extensive trade strategy. "Team Canada missions are really good for improving our relations with countries that don't yet come under a trade agreement, such as China, or where we have structural problems, such as Brazil," says Daniel Schwanen, senior economist at the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Trade officials are also starting to use Team Canada as the centrepiece of a more sustained promotional effort. After the September, 1999, mission to Japan, they organized seminars across Canada to highlight trade opportunities, then offered personalized help to interested firms. They also staged symposiums in Tokyo and Osaka last May featuring 26 Canadian information technology firms, attracting more than 600 Japanese participants.

Such individual care is paying off. Katlyn International Inc. of Waterloo, Ont., and Murata Machinery Ltd. of Kyoto had already signed a deal to build an Air Canada cargo handling system in Toronto when Katlyn marketing director Roland Mechler joined the 1999 Team Canada mission. On the trip, officials introduced Mechler to a Canadian living in Japan who, in turn, put him in touch with a firm that also needed a cargo facility. "We don't expect government to hold our hands," Mechler says, "but they have supported us."

In the end, Team Canada may be a useful attention-getting device for an often overlooked nation. But Tom Axworthy, former principal secretary to prime minister Pierre Trudeau, warns that the emphasis on trade could narrow the scope of Canada's relations with other nations—to its ultimate detriment. "Team Canada should involve culture and education and journalism as well as business," he says. "Keep the concept: it's a terrific one. But broaden it." That is, Team Canada may be more effective if it can turn customers into friends. m

Interest rates cut

Canadian banks dropped their prime lending rates a quarter of a point to 7.25 per cent after the Bank of Canada lowered its key rate by the same amount. The central bank's move to 5.75 per cent, the first change since last May and the last under outgoing governor Gordon Thiessen, followed a half-point cut by the U.S. Federal Reserve on Jan. 3 to six per cent. Last week, Fed chairman Alan Greenspan said the U.S. economy is "very close to zero" in growth. Analysts expect more rate cuts in both countries.

Royal's big buy

The Royal Bank of Canada extended its reach further into the United States with the $3.5-billion purchase of Centura Banks Inc. of Rocky Mount, N.C., in a friendly share swap. Operating in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, the bank, which has $17 billion in assets, will be known as RBC Centura Banks Inc.

Abrupt departure at Sears

The sudden resignation of respected retail veteran Paul Walters as CEO of Toronto-based Sears Canada Inc. startled industry insiders. Walters' successor, U.S.-based executive Mark Cohen, admitted the over-budget relaunch of Eatons, purchased in 1999, has been a "disappointment," but denied suggestions this played a part in Walters' exit. Walters did not comment.

From rock to jock

Toronto-based CHUM Ltd. will launch Canada's first 24-hour national sports-radio network in an effort to draw listeners back to its AM stations. The new format, called The Team, will replace current formats, mainly oldies music, in eight cities this spring.

Selling off screens

Two major North American movie chains said they will sell or close aging and obsolete theatres. In a bid to avoid bankruptcy, New York City-based Loews Cineplex Entertainment Corp. will get rid of 675 screens, probably including many in Canada. AMC Entertainment Inc. of Kansas City, Mo., will dispose of up to 548 U.S. screens.

Consumer pain, corporate gain

While Canadians dig ever deeper in their pockets to heat their homes and fuel their cars, Canadian oil and natural gas companies are reporting sky-high profits—pretty much for the same reason. Tight supplies and heavy demand have hiked natural gas and crude-oil prices to unprecedented levels, boosting energy profits to record levels. Imperial Oil Ltd., Shell Canada Ltd., Petro-Canada and Suncor Energy Inc. together made $3.6 billion in 2000. That is more than double their 1999 total of $1.6 billion. U.S.-based Exxon Mobil Corp., parent of Imperial, made $27 billion, the biggest profit in U.S. corporate history.



Paul Van Mackelbergh

Imperial's Esso, biggest profit in history

Shareholders in those companies, of course, will have some of their pump pain offset. And in one case that includes all Canadians. Petro-Canada, which nearly quadrupled its 1999 gains to $893 million last year, is still 18 per cent owned by the federal government.

Writing the final Chapter

Takeover mogul Gerry Schwartz and his wife, Heather Reisman, moved closer to their goal of buying bookseller Chapters Inc. after their opponent in the bidding war, electronics chain Future Shop Ltd., declined to raise the stakes. Schwartz and Reisman, who heads Chapters' rival, Indigo Books & Music Inc., have offered $17 cash per share to independent Chapters investors. Future Shop said it would let stand its previous cash-stock bid for all shares, valued at about $16 a share. "It's decision time," said Future Shop senior official Gary Patterson.

Financial Outlook

The hotel building boom is slowing. A study by real estate firm Colliers International Hotels of Toronto predicts that growth in the number of new hotel rooms in Canada will slow by 24 per cent this year to just under 6,000. Last year, the industry added about 7,600 rooms. The big builder was Niagara Falls, Ont., the perennial tourist magnet, which has become a regional casino centre. It added 993 new rooms, outstripping the Toronto area (709) and greater Vancouver (657). With supply still growing and demand remaining flat, hotel profitability is expected to stabilize this year after two years of double-digit growth. Hotel sales are also slowing—only 27 changed hands in 2000, down 36 per cent. Values increased by only one per cent.

ROOM AT THE INN

Number of new hotel rooms in Canada (Canadian total: 2000: 407,000)

	2000	2001
B.C.	1,513	710
Alta.	1,283	632
Sask.	441	217
Man.	651	236
Ont.	2,950	2,618
Que.	577	989
Atlantic	134	447
N.W.T.	66	0
Canada	7,615	5,851

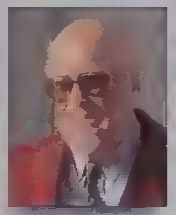
Source: Colliers International Hotels

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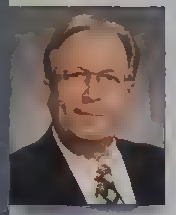

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Deirdre McMurdy

Power politics

On one hand, it's ironic that California, which has spawned so much high-tech innovation and so much of the New Economy culture, has been hit by old-fashioned electric power blackouts in recent weeks

On the other hand, it's frightening Because the push for power market deregulation, which has wrought so much havoc in California, is under way in Canada. And some experts, including Tom Adams, head of Toronto-based industry watchdog Energy Probe, claim that many of the problems encountered in California could be easily replicated here—with drastic results

The principal parallel between what Adams calls the California "power belly flop" and the Canadian situation is politics In California, political pressure led the state government to impose caps on rates, at a time when the cost of fuel for power generation was on the rise. As a result, power companies have been forced to sell electricity at prices lower than the cost of production At the same time as the price caps have deterred new entrants into the market, they have given consumers no incentive to curb their demand. And the resulting gap between supply and demand has forced existing players into the electricity spot market, buying from the likes of B.C. Hydro, as prices have soared.

California may have blown its bid to deregulate electricity, but that doesn't mean it's a bad idea

In Ontario and Alberta, the two jurisdictions in Canada that have advanced the furthest with plans for electric power deregulation, politics is already causing an equally dangerous warp in the process. According to David Drinkwalter, a former executive at Ontario Hydro who is now a consultant with Resource Associates Canada Inc of London, Ont., "Governments need to knuckle down and display real intestinal fortitude in their commitment to deregulation." But so far, that hasn't been apparent in either province

In Ontario, after considerable study, rhetoric and legislative change, Premier Mike Harris has been waffling and apparently moving away from deregulation, in part because of the negative publicity surrounding developments in Alberta and California. In the wake of a delay last year, the premier last week said that even though the target was to deregulate by the end of 2001, he is in no hurry to push ahead with market reform

But that's just the sort of message that exacerbates problems in the province's already-weakened power market Adams notes that despite its significant industrial base, Ontario's power supply system is "not in good shape": it is too dependent on troubled and costly coal and nuclear assets Given that scenario, prolonged uncertainty about the provincial government's timetable is discouraging investment at a time when, he says, "we desperately need to attract capital to get on track for the future."

In Alberta, the government's attempts to "manage" the transition to an open market have stumbled badly, as prices have soared and industries have become increasingly reliant on temporary subsidies Again, a large part of the problem is that the political commitment and rules for deregulation have not been clarified That impedes new capital investment in the electricity market at a time when a roaring economy has ignited record demand.

Energy Probe's Adams notes that Britain's deregulation of the power sector has worked well—it is generally held up as the most successful international model—because of strong curbs on government involvement in the process. For example, he says, a strong, independent regulator was established and empowered early on, keeping government at arm's length and attracting private capital to the sector There, prices have fallen

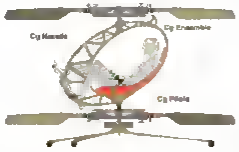
The painful and disruptive North American experience increasingly raises the question of whether some key elements of social and economic infrastructure should be exempt from the relentless push to privatize and deregulate The telecommunications and airline businesses, after all, are markedly different from essential services like water, health care or electric power And deregulation has, in many cases, become an ideologically trendy policy for governments seeking to cut costs and hive off responsibility and risk.

Still, when it comes to making the case for power market reform, Ontario Hydro stands as a compelling argument in favour In 1998, the bloated utility essentially collapsed under the weight of its $31-billion debt, most of which was guaranteed by provincial taxpayers But for years it expanded, unchecked, as cost overruns on such ill-fated projects as the Darlington nuclear plant were passed on to retail consumers, and industrial rate subsidies were given to business Although those subsidies are slated to be phased out after four years of deregulation, they were originally intended to deter major power users from building their own, lower-cost generating plants and competing with the government-controlled system.

While it's both easy and legitimate to be distracted by the recent chaos in California and Alberta, it remains important not to lose sight of the fact that in both cases, politics—not true, open-market deregulation—have caused the problems. Furthermore, existing government monopolies on generation and distribution have become entirely unsustainable To adapt Lord Acton all power tends to corrupt, but electrical power corrupts absolutely

To rise for the prize

In 20 years of trying, no one has come close to winning the American Helicopter Society's $30,000 Igor I. Sikorsky Human Powered Helicopter Competition. To claim the prize, contestants face the formidable task of building a helicopter that must hover for one minute, powered solely by one or more people pedalling furiously in the aircraft's cockpit. At some point during the exhausting flight, the craft must rise at least three metres. There have been 18 attempts, but only two helicopters have gotten off the ground—barely—and only for a few seconds.



Simon Joncas, the project leader for a 15-member group of engineering students at École de technologie superieure in Montreal, thinks he can do better.

The team's design, christened Helios after the Greek sun god, calls for twin rotors 35 metres in diameter, set above and below the pedaller and spinning in opposite directions. "It's all a question of stability," says Joncas, "and for that we'll have to wait for the testing."

The team has impressive credentials. Its four core members built Omer 3, a human-powered submarine, which in 1997 set a speed record of seven knots in Bethesda, Md. For Helios, the team has so far assembled one of two carbon-fibre rotors, which they plan to test in Montreal's Olympic Stadium this month. If all goes well, they will build the other rotor and the cockpit for a test flight, hopefully by next September.

They'd better hurry. A University of British Columbia team has a twin-rotor design of its own, called Thunderbird, with both rotors above the pilot's head. It, too, still requires a lot of assembly, but the team is also shooting for a flight in September.

No sour notes

Who needs musical talent when they have the MadPlayer? Poised for its commercial debut in July, MadPlayer uses software to randomly create music in several genres, including rap, hip hop, New Age, Latin, dance and techno.



Users can change the pitch, tempo, rhythm and bass, as well as add vocals or music samples. The music plays back on the device, or it can be channelled through a stereo, TV or computer. MadPlayer, made by MadWaves Corp. of Copenhagen, is expected to retail for about $375.

Danylo Hawaleshka

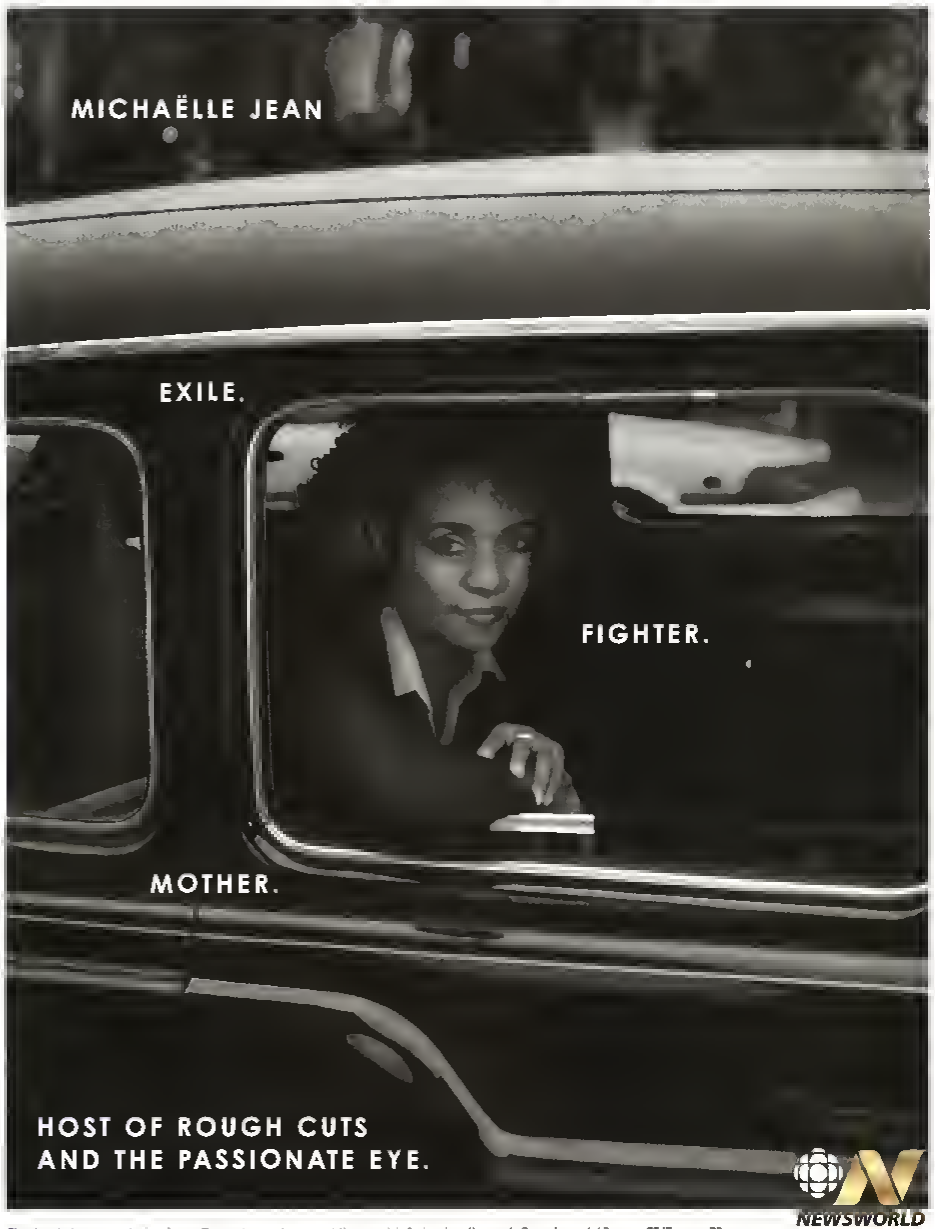
Cool site

This is IT

It is anybody's guess what Deka Research and Development Corp. in Manchester, N.H., is up to. The company's secret project, called IT, but also code-named Ginger, is believed by some to be a revolutionary design for a motorized scooter. When news leaked in January, some even suggested that Ginger, due in 2002, would be bigger than the Internet. Legendary inventor Dean Kamen, Deka's president, tried to deflate expectations, but interest remains high. Witness *www.ginger-hype.com*, a site dedicated to IT news and plenty of speculation.

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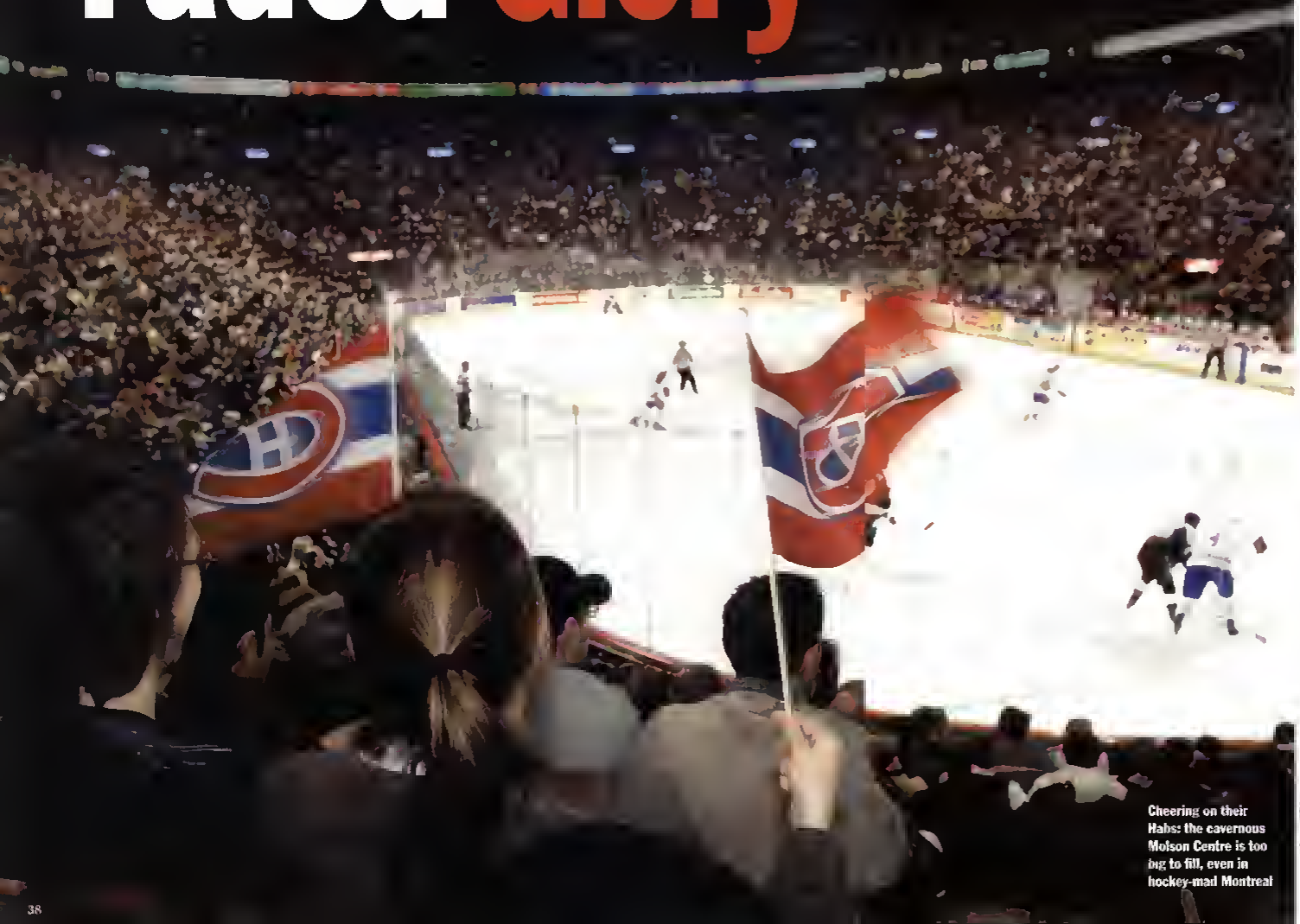


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Faded Glory

The Montreal Canadiens are battered on the ice, bruised as a business and about to be sold. It didn't have to come to this.



Cheering on their Habs: the cavernous Molson Centre is too big to fill, even in hockey-mad Montreal

And I to go: Maggie Bjornson

By James Deacon

It's not natural to feel sorry for the Montreal Canadiens. In fact, rival fans have every right to revel in the woes of the hated Habs. There are 24 Stanley Cup banners hanging in the rafters at the Molson Centre, 11 more than the National Hockey League's next most prolific Cup-winning team, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

But feel sorry anyway. *Les Glorieux* have become *les misérables*, and they are so far down that it would be un-Canadian to kick them. Facing off against the visiting New York Rangers on Jan. 20, for instance, the Canadiens had 10 players—half their regular roster—out of action due to injuries. So when veteran sniper Brian Savage scored only 20 seconds into the game, it gave a huge boost to a team fighting desperately for victories. But with these Canadiens, no good deed goes unpunished. Against the flow of the play, the Rangers scored two quick goals. And Rangers defenceman Rich Pilon cross-checked Savage face-first into the boards so violently that when Savage put up his hands to break the fall and protect his face, he broke his thumb and is lost for the season. In a gritty performance, Montreal came back to claim a tie against New York, but the dressing room afterward was sombre. "When is it going to end?" asked injured centre Trevor Linden, who had watched the carnage from the press box. "We just can't keep losing key guys every night."

It is unseemly to see hockey royalty, the successors to Howie Morenz, Maurice Richard and Guy Lafleur, in such a sorry state. Their two dozen championships make them the winningest team in North American pro sports, ahead of even the New York Yankees. Yet the Habs spent a few days in December mired in the NHL basement, no small achievement in a 30-team league with two expansion franchises unsteadily trying to find their feet and stocked with players recently deemed expendable by previous employers.

But the sorriest news out of Montreal is that no one there seems to want the team. Molson Inc., the long-time owner of the Canadiens, has been losing money on the franchise and put it up for sale last summer. The most obvious white knight was thought to be BCE Inc., since it is based in Montreal and could use telecasts of the 82 regular-season games as programming for its various media holdings, including CTV and TSN. But in a cold reminder of one city's decline and a rival's gain, BCE is rumoured to be more interested in purchasing a chunk of Toronto's Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment Inc., owners of the Leafs, the NBA Raptors and the plush Air Canada Centre. Perhaps BCE simply did the math: both teams suffer from paying skyrocketing U.S.-dollar salaries with 66-cent Canadian dollars, and both shoulder massive municipal tax bills. But the Leafs have a wealthier populace, more corporate sponsors and richer local broadcasting deals than the Habs.

As a result, Molson was negotiating last week to sell up



Andre Forget/CP

New York's Theoren Fleury battles Stephane Robidas in front of José Theodore: *Les Glorieux* have become *les misérables*

to 80 per cent of the Montreal franchise and its arena for a reported $200 million. League sources say the head of the leading bid group is George Gillett Jr., a Colorado-based high flyer with interests in ski resorts and meat packing. And if it goes through—league officials are expected to vote on the sale when they meet at the all-star weekend in Denver on Feb. 3 and 4—the deal would leave controlling interest in one of Canada's most admired institutions in foreign hands. Why? Because no Montrealer or Quebecer or Canadian thought the once-mighty Habs were worth the risk.

Feeling the intensity of the fans at the Molson Centre, and looking at the dozens of pages of Habs stories every day in the local papers, it is difficult to understand how the fabled franchise could decline so precipitously as a business in Montreal. The simple answer is bad management. Granted, the injuries have hurt, not just this season but last season, too, when the Canadiens were similarly decimated. And the economic forces that are working against other Canadian teams (page 43) also hurt the Canadiens. But the problems didn't have to be this severe.

The Molsons have certainly been benevolent and tradition-honouring owners. "They are great fans of the game," former Habs great Dickie Moore says of the family. "And if you want an example, Senator [Hartland] Molson is at every game and he's in his 90s." Still, the club failed to keep up with the changing demands of pro sports and did not operate like the $100-million-a-year business it is. Critics claim they hired poorly, particularly their general managers and coaches. Stunningly, it wasn't until last year, after current president Pierre Boivin took over, that the team created a marketing department and hired a ticket-sales staff. "The Montreal Canadiens have lived a nice life in the past, but sports have changed," says Pierre Ladouceur, the vice-president of marketing. "And unfortunately the Canadiens did not change fast enough. Now we're doing a bit of catch-up."

The Habs are talking to American investors because no Canadian thought they were worth the risk

Then there's the $250-million Molson Centre. Under then-Habs president Ron Corey, a former beer salesman, the team funded the construction of the project privately, without any government money. But in retrospect, insiders close to the arena deal say it was a massive and risky undertaking without the safety net of any kind of public funding. From its opening in 1996, it was clear the building had significant design shortcomings. With a vast capacity of 21,273, it is difficult to fill even in hockey-mad Montreal. "If it was a white sheet of paper and we had to redo it, it would be 2,000 seats less for sure," says Ladouceur. "It's just too big." And its concourses are too narrow to absorb the heavy intermission traffic, making it difficult for thirsty consumers to get to concessions. That frustrates ticket-holders, and worse, it reduces possible revenues.

Then there are the costs. The Habs are currently contesting what is undeniably a debilitating tax burden on the Molson Centre, and a judgment is expected soon. The 2001 local property- and business-tax bill, totalling $11 million, is more than three times the amount of municipal taxes paid by all 24 American NHL teams combined, and $1 million more than Toronto, where the Leafs can at least split the cost with the NBA Raptors. Cameron Charlebois, head of the Urban Development Institute, an association of Montreal developers, says the time to contest tax bills is before a project begins. Taxes are based on property valuations, so Molson would have been able to accurately calculate what they were going to owe the city before putting a shovel in the ground.

The economics have not scared off American investors—at least three groups have pursued the franchise in recent months. They are at an advantage because the exchange rate gives them a 40-per-cent discount on the team. And even peripheral fans understand the value of the Canadiens brand. The CH confers success at the highest levels, prestige and a storied history going back to the NHL's roots in Montreal. For that reason, many NHL insiders are nervous that Gillett's name has risen to the top of the bidders' list. He does have previous sports-ownership experience, although his holdings in football's Miami Dolphins, hockey's California Golden Seals and basketball's Harlem Globetrotters were all brief and hardly illustrious.

The nervousness comes from Gillett's financial misfortunes. In the 1980s, Gillett added 17 U.S. TV stations to his Wisconsin-based meat packing firm, Packerland Packing Co., and his ski resorts, including Vail in Colorado. With North America in a recession by 1992, his company, Gillett Holdings, defaulted on more than $1 billion of junk-bond debt, and he declared bankruptcy on nearly $100 million of personal debt. That financial meltdown not only cost him control of Vail, the TV stations and his meat-packing company, but also his home in Vail and a ranch in Oregon. To fans hoping for deep pockets and long-range planning for their hockey team, that is a worrisome résumé.

Supporters say that while Gillett may be a gambler, he is no dilettante. They claim he learned the hard lessons from those spectacular failures, and that his gregarious, cheerleading management style is just what the down-in-the-dumps Canadiens need right now. "What he did in Vail borders on the miraculous," says business associate Murray Merkley, president of Toronto-based Merkley Headgear. "He's a real team builder—he got everybody going there and turned that place around."

The public response to a foreign buyer, meanwhile, has been strangely mute. Perhaps fans are used to outside investment in local teams: the baseball Expos and football Alouettes are both owned by New Yorkers. Whatever the case, shoppers in the team's store at the Molson Centre, browsing through memorabilia and logoed apparel, seemed resigned to foreign ownership. Dave Bean, an oil company executive, was helping his four-year-old son, Matthew, try on coats while Matthew extolled the virtues of his favourite players, injured goalie Jeff Hackett and the brilliant but often brittle captain, Saku Koivu. "I think that, like a lot of people, I'd like to see a better team on the ice," Bean said after Matt settled on a nice red jacket with white sleeves. "If they are prepared to inject some capital into the team and make it more competitive, then that's great." League officials are simply looking for stability. "In terms of the health of the franchise, I hope the strongest financial group possible can buy it," says Brian Burke, president of the Vancouver Canucks. "I don't care if they're from Paraguay."

Optimists say there is huge potential in the Canadiens. The team has never fully exploited the power of its popularity across the country. In every Canadian NHL city where the Habs visit, there are hundreds of fans who turn out in *bleu, blanc et rouge*. To marketing and broadcasting executives, that indicates a huge appetite for everything from licensed apparel to pay-TV telecasts of Montreal games, particularly if the on-ice performance improves. That would produce higher revenues, and if the new owners can reach a deal with the city and province to relieve the tax burden, it would offer immediate cost reductions. But that's a big "if."

The Canadiens used to keep their best and brightest. Toe Blake finished his hall-of-fame playing career in Montreal and became a hall-of-fame coach behind the Montreal bench. Jean Béliveau stayed on in the front office, too. But in the last decade or more, many of the best have gone away, as witnessed by the plaques that adorn the walls in the Habs' dressing room. On polished granite, under portraits of past greats and the famed inscription "To you from failing hands we throw the torch, be yours to hold it high," the names of Montreal winners of various league trophies are etched.

One list of names tells a particularly damning story. Under the Conn Smythe Trophy, given annually since 1965 to the most valuable player in the Stanley Cup playoffs, there are nine entries. The most recent three names are: Larry Robinson, the former defenceman who last spring

coached New Jersey to the Cup, Bob Gainey, the great two-way winger who is general manager of the Dallas Stars, who won the Cup the year before, and goaltender Patrick Roy, who captured the Conn Smythe in both 1986 and 1993, and who now backstops Colorado, the team widely regarded as the favourite to win the Cup this season

Just as on the business side, the Canadiens have suffered through years of dubious hockey decisions—ill-conceived trades and ill-considered selections in the junior draft—that denied the club so much talent Many fans trace the current decline to former general manager Réjean Houle's decision to trade Roy to Colorado in 1995, but *La Presse* columnist Réjean Tremblay traces it to the departure of the previous general manager, Serge Savard. "The day they fired Savard to replace him with Houle, they assassinated the team," Tremblay says, adding: "After that, it was an organization that got rid of Patrick Roy, Pierre Turgeon, Vincent Damphousse and Mike Keenе It was senseless "

To shake things up last fall, Boivin replaced the much-criticized Houle last November with André Savard, whose job is nothing less than to fix the hockey team Unlike past team executives, Savard spent his playing days with some of the Habs' biggest rivals. He skated 12 seasons in Boston, Buffalo and Quebec City, and before that was a Leafs fan, of all things—he grew up near the Ontario border in Témiscaming, Que., where the Leafs signal was the only one available. Savard, 47, may fare better than his predecessor, particularly with the rabid press corps Unlike Houle, Savard paid his front-office dues as an assistant coach and scout before getting the big job He's an all-business kind of guy, and reputedly a keen judge of shinny talent

He has already shown a little of that Shortly after arriving, he traded for tough winger Gino Odjick and the swift Chad Kilger, both of whom stepped right in and helped the team until they, like so many others, were injured. But even though the team has played better recently, it remains a miracle-and-a-half out of a playoff spot And the Canadiens would have trouble making the playoffs even if they weren't missing their top scorer (Savage), No 1 goalie (Hackett), a key defenceman (Craig Rivet) and the No 2 centre (Linden)

Still, Savard sees a big upside with this team, and not too far in the future Watching the warm-up before the Rangers game from the coaches' booth high above centre ice, Savard says the early exposure to NHL play has sped the development of some younger players in the system. And after the all-star break, Savard says, injured forwards Linden, Damius Zubrus and Martin Rucinsky ought to be fit enough to play That won't make the Canadiens instant contenders, but they might be better than doubters think. So Savard isn't planning a major trade until he finds out what kind of team he actually has. "You can't overreact just because you're in a tough situation," he says "It's too easy to downgrade your team—you have to be patient "

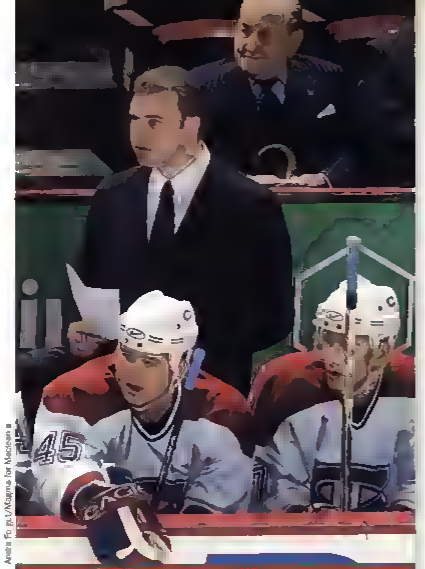
Supporting his rosy view, the Canadiens have played through the injury plague with great passion. They are tenacious on defence and frequently out-hustle opponents, even if they don't outscore them It doesn't hurt to have the scarred countenance of Guy Carbonneau at practice every day, helping head coach Michel Therrien. Carbonneau, a longtime Hab whom Houle traded in 1994 because the GM thought the gritty centre was washed up, played a season in St. Louis and the last five in Dallas, helping the Stars reach the finals in 1999 and 2000 So much for washed up Now, he is back in the fold as an assistant coach, and serving as the ideal example to the young players For 20 years in the NHL, Carbonneau scored key goals, blocked shots, killed penalties and sacrificed statistics to help his teams win He was also a key member of the Habs' last two Cup-winning teams.

Sitting in the dressing room, Carbonneau says all the portraits and plaques are more than just artifacts Sure, it adds some pressure, he says But the connection to past champions, he says, is a useful reminder of the talent and commitment it takes to achieve greatness. "Me, I think we can get back to where we were before," Carbonneau says. "Will we win another 24 Cups? That would be hard. But if we do the right things in the next little while, and if we are patient, we can win again " If Carbonneau is right, then the new owner will be getting a real bargain. And old rivals will feel comfortable hating the Habs again.

With Brenda Branswell in Montreal and Ken MacQueen in Vancouver

Are you concerned that the Montreal Canadiens might be sold to an American buyer?

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Therrien at the Montreal bench, backed by Senator Molson: benevolent owners

Early exposure to NHL play has sped the development of some younger players

The Numbers Game

By Ken MacQueen

It's a quiet Friday morning at General Motors Place and Vancouver Canucks president Brian Burke, dressed like Joe Canadian in flannel shirt and denim jeans, walks down a corridor to the fringe of the playing surface The ice is buried today under the hardwood of a basketball court, changing entirely the tone and character of the building. The Canucks are on a road trip, and their imprint here grows alarmingly faint Their dressing room stands empty. The advertising shifts to reflect tonight's confrontation between the Vancouver Grizzlies and the Miami Heat. The cold, hard sounds of hockey are replaced by the rich thump of basketballs and the squeal of Volkswagen-sized footwear as the Heat grinds through a pregame practice. For the past hour in his office, Burke has delivered a desk-thumping warning about the precarious state of many of Canada's six NHL teams, Here, watching the Heat, the point is taken: this is what a hockey team looks like when it's gone

The pending sale of Montreal's win-challenged Canadiens underscores the shaky state of Canada's Surviving Six franchises in a 30-team, Yankee-dollar-dominated NHL, "Every time the Canadian dollar moves a penny, it costs the Ottawa Senators $280,000 U S ,' says Roy Mlakar, the Senators' president. Only the Toronto Maple Leafs, with a huge population base and a fat roster of corporate support, have a claim to financial health Senators majority owner Rod Bryden is shopping for a buyer to take some or all of the financial load. The locally owned Calgary Flames and Edmonton Oilers lead a hand-to-mouth existence The Vancouver Canucks, spared by the deep pockets of their owner, Seattle businessman John E McCaw Jr., continue to add to losses of almost $140 million since moving into GM Place in 1995. The Quebec Nordiques relocated to Denver in 1995 Winnipeg lost its Jets to Phoenix a year later. Who's next? Small-market teams in Alberta and Ottawa are vulnerable, observers say An NHL position paper warned 15 months ago that without relief from currency and taxanon differentials, "at least some of the Canadian clubs in the very near term will find it impossible to continue to operate in Canada."

A year ago, John Manley, then industry minister, announced the government would buy into a subsidy if the NHL, provinces and municipalities also contributed—and if the league moved in the 2004 round of player negotiations to share revenues and cap salaries Manley bailed out of the bailout just three days later, after an outcry over tax breaks ro millionaire players and team owners "It was a very predictable response," says a still frustrated Bill Daly, executive vice-president of the NHL and its chief legal officer Daly wishes all parties had done a better job of selling the public on the economic and cultural contribution of the teams to Canada Meantime, over the past few years, the NHL has poured tens of millions of dollars into Canadian team-assistance plans, and each team pleaded for breaks from local governments After years of appeals, the Corel Centre in Ottawa got its municipal taxes reassessed from $4,1 million to less than $1 million

The NHL makes the case for assistance on several fronts. It cites a 1994 study showing the Alberta teams contributed $178 million to the local and provincial economies. It notes that the weak Canadian dollar puts each club at a $10-million to $15-million disadvantage against U S teams every season The league's greatest frustration, however, is government refusal to share sports lottery revenues The NHL estimates betting on hockey raised Canadian lottery revenues of $170 million in 1997 Daly says the league wants to work with governments to create a new hockey lottery, or to strike an agreement allowing existing lotteries to use NHL logos Puck-shy Liberals aren't biting "There's no way we'll do something about the lottery," federal secretary of state for amateur sport Denis Coderre said in mid-January "And the tax incentives, forget it."

Meanwhile, rumours abound that the legendary rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary may end with one team moving south "That's an eventuality I wouldn't even want to contemplate," says Ron Bremner, president of the Flames The Canucks' Burke wants to fight the lottery issue in court if a brokered deal isn't reached. "We've lost two teams," he warns "Wake up, we're going to lose more." m



Adrian Wyld/CP

Current combined property and business taxes for NHL arenas, except where noted

Montreal	$11,000,000
Toronto	10,000,000
Vancouver	2,400,000
Ottawa	900,000
Calgary	534,700
Edmonton*	[illegible],000
Boston*	730,000
Colorado*	50,000

At least 14 of 24 U S franchises pay no local taxes at all

*1999



The Good Old Days

Back to basics on an outdoor rink in Montreal: brushes with greatness

Article Property/Magma for Maclean's

By Anthony Wilson-Smith

One night in the spring of 1979, some guys from Montreal's Nôtre Dame de Grace district gathered at a downtown nightclub to mark the upcoming nuptials of a friend by drinking lots of beer. Ranging in age from 20 to 60, all were avid hockey fans. For that reason, the best man took particular heat: the stag night he had chosen coincided with a Canadiens playoff game, and there was no TV in the bar. Despite all the complaints—and guests dashing out to check the score—the best man was unabashed. "You guys will thank me yet," he kept saying. "Just wait." Sure enough, about half an hour after the game ended—with a Habs win—the door opened, and a small, squat man rolled in to gasps of astonishment. It was Scotty Bowman, their legendary coach, and for the next two hours he regaled everyone with anecdotes and remarkably frank assessments of his team.

Hockey's golden era, Ken Dryden says, was whenever you were 12 years old

Many of those present that night still recall what Bowman said—but to repeat his remarks would violate the spirit of the evening, not to mention Bowman's confidences. He was a friend of the groom—they had grown up together—and Bowman wanted to pay his respects. And while on one level Bowman inspired awe, everyone recognized him as one of their own. "Geez," said someone at night's end, "maybe we could ask him around to the tavern."

That never happened, but in NDG—a neighbourhood of middle-class homes mixed with more downtrodden mean streets—brushes with greatness weren't uncommon then. NDG has produced a lot of tough, talented players, and one of the best then was a son of Doug Harvey. That meant you could see the greatest defenceman of his era watching his teenage boy play at the local rink (later renamed Doug Harvey Arena) and, if you were lucky, hear him tell stories later over a beer. Sometimes, when NDG played teams in the city's north end, Maurice Richard would show up. He had a grandson playing, and the two immortals would nod to each other, then move to far ends of the rink, divided by familial allegiances.

In NDG, Sam Pollock, the Habs' legendary general manager, lived in a nice but modest home not far from the rink. some people remembered when he used to organize softball tournaments. John Ferguson, the retired but still terrifying hard-rock winger, was an occasional arena visitor. If anyone wanted a Habs player to attend the annual sports banquet, they got on the phone to the Canadiens' front office—and vice-president Jean Beliveau would often attend ro things personally. On weekends during the summer, Henri Richard played doubles at NDG's Monkland Tennis Club, and for several years, Ken Dryden and his family lived nearby.

It's tempting to think of that period in the late 1970s, with four straight Stanley Cups, as hockey's peak period in Montreal. It was around that time that Jean Drapeau, the longtime mayor, announced after a Stanley Cup win one year that the celebratory parade would be held on "the usual route." But any descent into nostalgia brings to mind an observation Dryden once made. Asked what he thought was hockey's golden era, he answeted that it was whenever you were 12 years old: players from that time loom largest in memory.

Still, it's true that the Canadiens' achievements then *were* daunting: in the 1976-1977 season, they lost fewer than 10 games on their way to another Cup. But what stands out even more in retrospect is how approachable the players were. Even in the 1970s, by which time the salary spiral had begun in other sports, a lunch-bucket mentality still prevailed in hockey: the income of players wasn't *that* far removed from that of their fans. Players lived in the city year-round, stayed after retirement, and stars like Dryden, Bob Gainey and Larry Robinson made the effort to become fluent in French.

Those days now seem even rosier in reminiscence. It's a cliché that the great Montreal teams prospered with a fairly equal mix of anglophones and francophones. They were the Habs in English, *les Glorieux* or the *bleu, blanc, rouge* in French, and awe-inspiring in any language. That image of linguistic harmony is largely—but not completely—accurate. Real old-timers recall the Montreal Maroons, the Canadiens' arch-rivals from 1924—when they were founded—unul 1938, when they folded. The Maroons were English Montreal's team, while francophones favoured the Habs. Even in the 1980s, teams representing mostly Anglo NDG in inter-district competition were called the Maroons, in a direct nod to that past. And, as Dryden recounted in his seminal 1983 book, *The Game*, there was often an undercurrent of linguistic tension in the Canadiens' dressing room. Fans of both language groups used to debate whether Anglo or francophone players were facing subtle discrimination—though such discussions usually vanished at playoff time.

These days, you don't find that debate around the Canadiens—or any other emotion, save embarrassment and frustration. The players live in rented condos and apartments around town, and, when the season ends, most leave. In other days, the Habs were part of the fabric of Montreal; they excelled even as the city seemed in decline. Now, Montreal is prospering economically, but the hockey team needs life support. And the worst thing, for those who remember past grandeur? Around Doug Harvey Arena, few people care. MM

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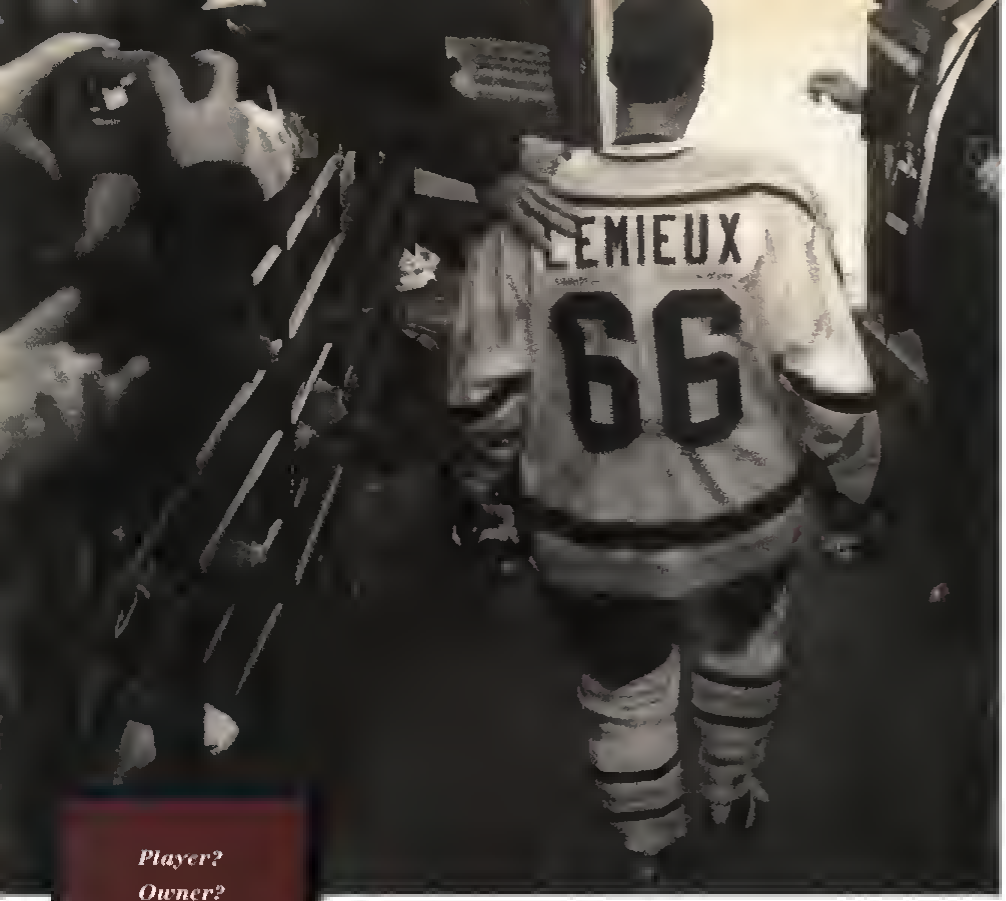
Using enzyme modified milk proteins, for example, Dr. Gauthier can produce egg-free mayonnaise. Her research is also being used to develop easily digestible, high-protein drinks and food products for endurance athletes. And, if that isn't enough, she is also exploring the potential of these proteins to reduce blood pressure.

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Out of Harmer's way

Sarah Harmer has never paid much attention to year-end critics' picks. But all that changed when *You Were Here*, her first solo CD of original material, showed up on a series of year 2000 Top 10 lists—including *Maclean's*. Although devout fans of her Kingston, Ont., folk-rock band **Weeping Tile** may have expected great things from a solo Harmer, for others *You Were Here* came out of nowhere. "It was sort of an underdog thing—when nobody has any expectations of you, but you have your own," says the 30-year-old singer-songwriter. "While recording, I would think, 'Just wait till they hear this.' "



Harmer: solo CD was this year's sleeper hit

Harmer, the youngest of six children raised in Burlington, Ont., started singing in church when she was 3. Over the years, she picked up guitar, piano and drums. She left her studies at Queen's University in 1993 to give full attention to Weeping Tile—the band put out three albums before a 1998 hiatus. Continuing on solo, Harmer released *You Were Here*, while the rest of the band, guitarist **Luther Wright**, bassist **Sean Kelly** and drummer **Cam Geroux**, recorded *Luther Wright and the Wrongs Rebuild the Wall*. "It is a complete country bluegrass version of **Pink Floyd**'s *The Wall*—with banjos and steel lap guitars," says Harmer. "It is pretty awesome." After her stint as the critics' darling, Harmer is happy to turn the spotlight on her friends.

Sue's rockin' blues

She may not fit the stereotype, but **Sue Foley** is a bona fide blues artist. At 32, the Canadian guitarist is a veteran of the road, having performed in clubs all over North America since her late teens, sharing stages with the likes of **Otis Rush**, **Albert Collins** and **Buddy Guy**. Meanwhile, her gritty guitar and sultry vocals have landed her recording deals with such prestigious U.S. blues labels as Antone's and Shanachie. Four years ago, after a seven-year stint living in Austin, Tex., Foley moved back to her home town of Ottawa to give birth to a son, **Joe**. Now, with the success of her sixth album, the Juno-nominated *Love Comin' Down*, the road beckons again.



Foley: the road beckons

Last month, Foley opened for **B. B. King** and will be performing in weeks ahead with **John Lee Hooker**, **Johnny Winter** and the **Neville Brothers**. "I'll go wherever the blues takes me," says Foley. "It's been my calling, my living and my lifestyle for a long time now."

Save the last dance

Even on crutches, **Veronica Tennant** carries herself with grace. The former prima ballerina for the National Ballet of Canada, now 55, underwent hip replacement surgery in December and is making a quick recovery. Tennant has a history of bouncing back. "I half way through my career I had knee surgery and was away from the stage for 14 months," she says. "When I made it back, every moment counted."



Tennant, from stage to screen

But this time when Tennant returns to work, it will be behind the scenes—as a documentary film producer. In 1999, she won an Emmy for *Karen Kain: Dancing in the Moment*. This week, her latest dance film, *The Four Seasons*, which is co-produced with Rhombus Media and stars **Rex Harrington**, premieres on CBC. Also this week, the CBC turns the camera on Tennant with a *Life and Times* profile. In the documentary, Tennant—who is married to Toronto doctor **John Wright** and has a 23-year-old daughter—tells how a second career has helped her to turn away from the barre.

Grading schools

Bush unveils his 'voucher-lite' program

By Andrew Phillips

It was not so long ago that Republicans had a big, bold idea for the U S department of education: shut it down. Newt Gingrich and his right-wing revolutionaries believed the best thing Washington could do for troubled American schools was to get out of the way and let states fix the problems. But that was then and this, George W. Bush made clear last week, is now. Just three days into his fledgling presidency, Bush proposed an ambitious plan for expanding the federal government's role in education. If he gets his way, schools will have to test students more often, raise their standards—and as a last resort, let parents use federal money to help pay for private education. "If children are trapped in schools that will not teach and will not change," said Bush, "there has to be a consequence."



Bush at a Houston school: cash rewards to raise test scores

Critics call that the voucher system—and Bush studiously avoided using that hot-button phrase. Most Democrats, backed by the big U.S. teachers' unions, strongly oppose diverting public money into private schools. They argue that just siphons resources away from public schools at a time when they need more help, not less. But the striking thing about Bush's plan is the limited role that vouchers would play. The new President proposed giving the public-school system at least $40 billion in new federal money over five years. In return, he would demand rigorous annual testing of students from Grades 3 to 8, require schools to ensure that all pupils can read by Grade 3, and offer cash rewards to states and schools that raise test scores.

Most politicians in both parties support those ideas. The sticking point will come over Bush's proposal to give federal money to parents to pay for private education if public schools are judged to have failed. Under his plan, Washington would provide new money to improve local schools that fall below minimum state performance standards for two years in a row. If a school fails for a third year, parents would be eligible for grants averaging $2,250 a year to help pay for private schooling, tutors or other help. The idea, Bush insisted, is to prompt public schools to improve. A moderate Republican congressman, Michael Castle of Delaware, called the approach "voucher-lite," adding: "The President is talking about vouchers under very limited circumstances."

As it stands, vouchers affect only a tiny number of students in the United States. There are only three major public-school voucher plans—in Milwaukee, Cleveland and Florida—involving just 14,000 pupils. The programs have underscored a racial divide over the issue. White parents tend to oppose vouchers as a threat to their high-quality suburban public schools. But a growing number of black Americans back the idea under the slogan of "parental choice." For them, vouchers offer a way to get their children out of substandard, often violent inner-city schools. Many opt for schools affiliated with religious groups—especially Catholic parochial schools that charge relatively low fees—arousing opposition from those who believe vouchers violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

Some black parents have been outspoken. Dorothy Smith, a foster mother of seven in Milwaukee, has used that city's pioneering voucher plan to send four of her children to privately run schools. A year-old group called the Black Alliance for Educational Options used her story as part of a $2-million ad campaign to promote vouchers and other ways for minority parents to get their children out of the worst inner-city schools. "I don't know where my children would be without the choice program," Smith said in a recent TV ad aired by the group. "You should have the right to get the same education for your child whether you're rich or poor."

Bush's cautious approach to vouchers offers more proof that they have lost momentum as a way to tackle the shortcomings of American schools. Other ways to increase choice for parents—such as charter schools within the public system—are becoming more popular. Voters in California and Michigan rejected ballot proposals for new voucher plans last November, and in December a court ruled that the Cleveland plan is unconstitutional. Most Democrats and even some Republicans oppose vouchers, and Bush's soft approach suggests he may be prepared to water down his position to get an education plan through Congress. That was his signature issue in Texas—and by acting in Week 1 of his administration he showed he believes it can be a winner in Washington. m



Toner: symptoms may be aggravated by stress of various kinds—physical, hormonal, dietary or psychological

Health

A disorder comes out of the closet

By Mark Nichols

As a child, Margaret (not her real name) remembers experiencing cramps and searing abdominal pains that "no one else seemed to have." As she grew up, the problem persisted, bringing bouts of pain early in the day. "For years, I had problems with absenteeism and being late for work," says the 50-year-old mother of three, who lives outside Vancouver. Her doctor sent her for a battery of tests, which showed there was nothing physically wrong. Then in 1997, she switched doctors—and her life was transformed. After reading Margaret's medical records, the physician told her she might have a disorder called irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). After that, Margaret began taking medication that eased her cramps, and made contact with thousands of fellow IBS sufferers on the Internet. "At last," says Margaret, "there are people I can talk to and learn from. My life is more normal now than it has ever been."

Margaret has a relatively mild form of the condition that afflicts at least two million Canadians—two-thirds or more of them women—with symptoms that include abdominal cramps and pain, constipation and diarrhea. Because there is no known cause—or cure—IBS for years has remained in medical limbo, with patients going from one physician to another in an often fruitless search for help. "Sometimes," says Dr. Geoffrey Turnbull, a Halifax gastroenterologist, "IBS patients get the message from family physicians that 'your condition isn't serious.'" Now, with increased research and clearer guidelines for family physicians, that may be changing. "This disorder," says Toronto psychologist Brenda Toner, "is coming out of the closet."

Millions suffer privately from irritable bowel syndrome

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Still, IBS victims are often understandably embarrassed by their affliction. Some with severe forms of the disorder, notes Toner, "are so afraid of having an 'accident' in public, they won't leave their homes." Working with researchers in North Carolina, Toner has developed a "cognitive-behavioural" approach to the disorder based on evidence of an interplay between the gastrointestinal system and the brain. "Stress does not cause IBS," says Toner. "But IBS symptoms may be aggravated by stress of various kinds—physical, hormonal, dietary or psychological."

On a physical level, physicians know that some dietary items—including coffee, fatty foods, green peppers, onions and raw vegetables—can trigger IBS symptoms. And a wide range of remedies, including antidepressant drugs and fibre supplements, can help alleviate symptoms. But the key, according to Turnbull, lies in patients learning to identify and control factors that can trigger symptoms. Turnbull encourages patients with IBS to devise stress-management practices, such as relaxation exercises and avoidance of stressful situations.

Though scientists have yet to pin down the details, Toner and other researchers believe IBS is associated with a malfunction in the neural circuits linking the bowel and brain. It could turn out to have other origins. In December, researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles reported that treatment with antibiotics left 50 per cent of the IBS patients tested temporarily free of symptoms. A team led by gastroenterologist Dr. Mark Pimentel, a Thunder Bay, Ont., native, administered antibiotics to 47 IBS patients who had bacteria in their small intestines, organs that are usually free of microbes. "The important thing about this," said Pimentel, "is that it gives us a direction that could point to a cause of IBS"—and eventually lead to more effective treatment for an affliction that brings misery to millions. m



Mike Pinder for Maclean's

He writes, he scores

By Brian Bethune

Somewhere inside Roy MacGregor there still lives the hockey-playing kid he once was, full of dreams of glory and practical jokes. And not very deep inside either, laughs the accomplished newspaper columnist and award-winning author, now a 52-year-old father of four. "Ah, I don't think I could argue that even if I wanted to. I find it so easy to remember being 12." MacGregor's believable young characters have brought burgeoning success to his Screech Owls novels. His series about a mystery-solving peewee hockey team from fictional Tamarack, Ont., will soon have a million copies in print in Canada, to go with healthy sales of Swedish, Czech, Chinese and French editions. "The Screech Owls are the great, hidden Harry Potter of our business," says McClelland & Stewart publisher Doug Gibson, who has so far issued 14 of the $5.99 adventures. And now the Owls have landed on TV, with the first of 13 weekly half-hour episodes airing on YTV on Feb. 8.

It was McClelland & Stewart that, in 1995, first thought of a hockey series as a way of catching the interest of publishing's black hole, boys aged 9 to 13. And the first writer who came to mind was MacGregor, author of the 1983 adult hockey novel *The Last Season* and one of the country's most respected commentators on the game. But the suspense element came from MacGregor, who had just become hooked on mysteries while reading Agatha Christie by the bedside of his dying sister, Ann, a longtime *Maclean's* researcher. And it was MacGregor, too, with his memories of his own peewee days, who provided the antics, although he keeps the printed versions on what he calls "the church side of naughty."

Most of the books' escapades spring from the fertile imagination and serious impulse-control problem of Wayne Nishikawa, known as Nish. The ambitious plans of the team's prankster range from a plot to moon a billion-strong TV audience on New Year's Eve, 1999, to repeated attempts to rewire hotel-room TVs so he can watch the adult movies. "Nish has turned out vital to the books' success," says MacGregor. "In the letters I get from kids he's a runaway superstar." But he's not the only fan favourite. The multicultural Owls, with players of Japanese, Saudi Arabian, Russian, Swedish and Jamaican heritage, are also co-ed. Sarah Cuthbertson, the gifted centre who is the finest player on a very good team, has set pubescent pulses racing among the novels' predominantly male readership. "I've never had a boy complain about having girls on the team," notes a somewhat surprised MacGregor, an enthusiastic proponent of girls' hockey. "Now, I'm starting to get mail from kids who have heard of the TV show, and want the e-mail address of the actress playing Sarah—they haven't even seen her yet."

Then there's Travis Lindsay, from whose point of view the stories unfold. The team captain isn't the most skilled or even the biggest Owl, but he is a responsible, thoughtful child who faces his own fears—of the dark, of being hurt by a slapshot—and leads the others by example. "Small kids love Travis," MacGregor says, "because he's not big, but he's brave. He's directly modelled on my son, Gordon, who loved sports but was small. What can you do? You just have to keep telling them they'll grow." There is a little of himself in Travis, too, MacGregor admits, "especially in his constant worrying about things." Although, the writer adds, "I've got two good friends from peewee days, guys I've known since kindergarten, who swear I'm actually Nish."

In fact, Roy MacGregor's life permeates every aspect of the Screech Owls books. The team from tiny Tamarack—in reality MacGregor's central Ontario home town of Huntsville—is not only improbably multicultural, it's impossibly well travelled. Everywhere MacGregor has been, what he mischievously calls "the world's richest peewee team" is sure to follow. Like the author, the Owls have been to Stockholm and to Nagano, Japan, site of the 1998 Winter Olympics. In their next adventure, to be released on May 19, the Owls fly to Sydney, Australia, where MacGregor covered the 2000 Summer Games. Not are the Owls ever far from their creator's mind. "When I got to Nagano and saw the heated toilet seat in the bathroom," he recalls, "the first thing I thought was, 'What Nish could do with this!' "

More than MacGregor's journalistic travels are apparent in the Screech Owls books. There are constant traces of a sports-filled life—memories of playing hockey for Huntsville against Bobby Orr's team from neighbouring Parry Sound, of 7 a.m. practices with his own children. Decades of meditation on hockey have made MacGregor "the anti-Cherry," as he calls himself in reference to *Hockey Night in Canada*'s rock 'em, sock 'em commentator. "I believe it's a fun game, that the Europeans have much to teach us, that it's ridiculously over-coached. Hockey needs more practice, fewer games, more *play*." The Owls fool around with puck and stick almost as much as they compete in games, and mysteries are quickly solved to leave room for something more exciting—hockey. And his readers tell him "it's *real* hockey, that it feels right. Believe me, if you write about a sport without knowing it well, kids will see right through it."

All that created a challenge for the TV series, one the producers successfully met with some deft scriptwriting and an engaging cast. Individual traits and events MacGregor spread over an 18-member team are shoehorned into the show's four main characters. Wisely, the producers didn't restrict themselves to MacGregor's physical descriptions. Their Sarah, African-Canadian Nicole Hardy, is as pretty as the author's, but not blond. Red-haired Jonathan Malen is not of Japanese descent, but he's clearly in touch with his inner Nish. And their enthusiastic Travis seems born for his role. The middle child of Richard Greenblart, who co-wrote and starred in the stage hit *2 Pianos, 4 Hands*, and writer-director Kate Lushington, William Greenblatt, 13, loves reading, mysteries and the same kind of hockey Roy MacGregor does. "I'm into the old stuff, too," he says. "I play a lot of shinny. Frank Mahovlich is my all-time favourite player." A fan of the Screech Owls books long before his audition, Greenblatt remembers thinking as he read them, "Oh yeah, they should make a series, and I should play Travis."

In print and on the screen, MacGregor's true-to-life hockey is framed by morality plays. The Owls don't always win. Team members become selfish or jealous of one another, they take up smoking or get caught shoplifting. There's real punishment and real repentance. And always a second chance. "Ah, that's just the old coach in me," says MacGregor, who used to run his son's peewee team. "At the end of every year, a coach hopes each kid has improved, either as a player or as a person." MacGregor believes that any sport that obsesses an entire population speaks volumes about the national culture. So what does hockey say about us? "The Canadian love of hockey is about stubbornness, co-operation and inventiveness," says the old coach. "And keeping warm."

Mystery, wild antics and *real* hockey propel the burgeoning success of the Screech Owls



Malen (left), Greenblatt and Hardy; MacGregor (opposite); constant traces of the author's travels and sports-filled life



Brian D. Johnson

Dreaming in exile

A new film conjures Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas

In *Shadow of the Vampire*, the director of *Nosferatu*, played by a bloodless John Malkovich, warns his star—an actual vampire, played by Willem Dafoe—that he must not devour his leading lady until the end of the shoot. In the meantime, the director suggests: "Eat the writer." The joke, of course, is on Hollywood, where writers are as disposable as wet wipes in a makeup trailer. But if the movies now vying for Oscar attention are any indication, Hollywood has a newfound passion for the thwarted writer. As the imprisoned Marquis de Sade in *Quills*, Geoffrey Rush "self-publishes" using his own blood and skin after being robbed of ink and paper. In *Finding Forrester*, Sean Connery is a reclusive author imprisoned by his own demons. And in *Wonder Boys*, Michael Douglas is lost in the quagmire of a second novel. But if you are going to see just one movie about a tortured writer, the least contrived and most profoundly affecting is *Before Night Falls*, the story of the gay Cuban poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas, who died as an exile in Manhattan after a life of persecution and imprisonment under Castro.



Bardem (left), Depp: Cuba's answer to Walt Whitman

Its director, New York City painter Julian Schnabel, knew Arenas, just as he knew the subject of his first movie, *Basquiat* (1996), which chronicled the life of another martyred artist of Caribbean extraction. But Jean-Michel Basquiat, a painter who flamed out on drugs in 1988, was a victim of his own success. Arenas, who committed suicide in 1990 after a battle with AIDS, died in obscurity and squalor. He left behind more than 20 books, but published just one in his native land.

Like *Basquiat*, Schnabel's new film is an impressionistic portrait, and the storytelling is skittish. But it's not pure biography. While it takes its title from Arenas's memoir, *Before Night Falls* also draws on his fiction, so that his real and imaginary lives mesh with promiscuous abandon. And Schnabel achieves something quite miraculous: this American director, and a cast performing in accented English on location in Mexico, have somehow conjured up Cuba.

There are juicy cameos from Sean Penn, as a gold-toothed peasant driving an ox cart, and Johnny Depp, who shows up in two roles, as a transvestite bombshell who smuggles Arenas's novel out of prison in suppository-sized instalments, and as a sexually sadistic police interrogator. But the movie comes down to a one-man show by Spanish actor Javier Bardem—who, ironically, had to learn English to play its Cuban protagonist. Inhabiting the role with a raw conviction, he conveys heartbreaking empathy for this literary hero, Cuba's answer to Walt Whitman. Bardem was nominated for a Golden Globe, and deserves an Oscar: in the past year, no actor has delivered as powerful a performance.

Before Night Falls follows Arenas from a dirt-poor peasant childhood. Abandoned by his macho father, he is raised by a beautiful, embittered mother. He remembers being ravished by the beauty of tropical rain scouring zinc roofs, and by the sight of young men bathing naked in the river. As an adult, Arenas remains a naif, surrendering to the world like a boy rolling down a hillside. Finding his voice as a writer, he embraces the Revolution, and the sexual revolution that arrives in its slipstream. In a world where anything is possible, he is seducing soldiers with impunity. But soon after, wearing only his swimsuit, he is being dragged by police from a beach to a dungeon.

Arenas's attempts to flee Cuba are picaresque adventures in pathos. One night he paddles out to sea in an inner tube. Another time he joins a group that plans to ride a hot-air balloon through a hole in the roof of a ruined villa. In the end, escape is a more tawdry affair as he accepts a government offer to let homosexuals, mental patients and criminals leave the country. Although it portrays the regime in a harsh light, *Before Night Falls* does not come across as a Castro-bashing morality tale. After all, Arenas escapes to a dubious freedom. He feels brief euphoria as he gazes up to see the miracle of snow falling out of a Manhattan night, but in this land of opportunity he dies stateless and penniless. His writing, which flows over the images, is his only salvation: "I pull off the typewriter cover, and stare at her dusty, cold shape. . . . I run my fingers over her keyboard. . . . The walls recede, the roof vanishes, and you float . . . transported, immortalized, saved, honoured." Schnabel brings that dream into the light, a tattered flag of lyric poetry. And it becomes clear that this is not another tale of a writer's triumph over adversity, but a picture of imagined freedom, painted in sad, evocative colours.



Burkett: hailed as 'a necessity of civilized theatregoing'

Theatre

Pulling strings of tears and laughter

A Canadian puppeteer has garnered wide acclaim

The young Canadian soldier kneels onstage. Before him lies a Holocaust survivor—naked, skeletal and barely alive. The soldier has just arrived with his liberating army at one of Hitler's death camps, and wants to help her. But the woman tells him to go away. She considers herself dead, she explains, because she has lost her family. The soldier hesitates, then leans forward to make a promise that will change both their lives. "I'll be your family," he gently tells her while her ghastly face stares in disbelief.

The moment is piercing, but what makes it even more astonishing is that these are puppets. And Ronnie Burkett, the man who is speaking their lines, is clearly visible as he manipulates their controls. Yet no one in the theatre seems distracted by the youthfully handsome 43-year-old, so complete is the spell he casts in his newest show, *Happy*, a tragicomic tale about the residents of a boarding house and their often painful memories. Over the past five years, the Medicine Hat, Alta., native has become Canada's most explosive presence on the international theatre scene since Robert Lepage (who himself uses puppets in his latest show, *The Far Side of the Moon*). Burkett's earlier full-length plays, *Tinka's New Dress* and *Street of Blood*, have won critical and popular acclaim at home and in the United States and Europe. They've gathered important prizes even when in competition with actor-based dramas. Wrote one New York critic: "Seeing Burkett's troupe every few years has become a necessity of civilized theatregoing."

Speaking between shows in the empty lobby of Toronto's Berkeley Street Theatre, where *Happy* is playing until March 3, Burkett exhibits both the candour and tremulous sensitivity that inform so many of his stage characters. "It's sometimes a bit daunting for me, out there in the real world," he acknowledges. "The only way I can understand it—not control it—is to shrink it to manonette size and have my discussion that way."

Discussion is the critical word here. *Happy* is the third instalment of a trilogy that also includes *Tinka* and *Street of Blood*, and that examines issues of memory, suffering and the struggle towards joy. Various points of view seethe through the plays, which have a philosophical undercurrent while remaining undogmatic and, very often, screamingly funny. In fact, Burkett's work sometimes seems to ride the edge of anarchy, especially when he starts ad-libbing during a performance. But his mastery of a show is total; in fact, Burkett says he tries—through dramatic tension and release—to get the audience breathing with the same rhythm. "That joint breath the audience takes is what makes the characters come alive."

For most of his career, Burkett has been based in Alberta, where he began performing as a puppeteer when he was only 14. But a new love interest has recently lured him from Calgary to Toronto. Or, as Burkett puts it: "My heart moved here and I followed it." His priority now is to find a new studio-workshop—a bit tricky, given Toronto rents—as well as establishing a small, informal theatre space where he can continue with the improvisation sessions that were so productive in Calgary. "I just make up 20 or so puppets—politicians, opera-singing cows—and then I read the newspapers of the day and I stand up onstage and see what happens." Burkett, who can be wickedly satirical, has discovered many of his best characters this way, including Edna Rural, the bigot with the heart of gold who stole the spotlight in *Street of Blood*.

The growing popularity of such figures raises the question: why doesn't Burkett clone his productions and send several on the road at once? But the puppeteer, who works with only a small backstage crew, swiftly rejects the idea. "I like my little ragtag company the way it is," he says. "The minute I can't have my hands on everything, it's no longer fun."

John Bemrose

Entertainment Notes

Edited by *Susan Oh*



Audience participation, dressed up while they sing, dance and cheer along

Alive with the sound

For Ben Freedman, *The Sound of Music* is much more than a classic film about a singing family that flees Nazi Austria. "It's an integral part of our family folklore," says the 39-year-old London-based producer of the runaway hit *Sing-A-Long Sound of Music*, which opens at Toronto's Eglinton Theatre on Feb. 23 and will later travel throughout Canada. Christopher Plummer, who starred in the 1965 movie and is a friend of Freedman's parents—actor Toby Robins and theatre producer Bill Freedman—frequented the family's London home during filming. "He'd talk about making this musical and how it could be disastrous for his career," recalls Freedman. "Little did he know." For the *Sing-A-Long*, audience members have been known to dress up in nuns' habits and military uniforms while they sing, dance and cheer along with the movie. "Wherever they are," says Freedman, "I wish Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer could be flies on the wall at a show."

Teenage thumbs-up

When it comes to movies, 17-year-old Jamey Hughton doesn't mince words. Of last year's *Battlefield Earth*, he says, "It's amazing that so many people dedicated so much time and money to make such a heap of crap." He's more than an armchair critic: the Grade 12 Saskatoon student has been reviewing films since he started at the local *StarPhoenix* newspaper at 13. His columns can also be seen in a Shanghai weekly and at several Internet sites. One of four teens, and the only Canuck youth, belonging to the International Online Film Critics Society, Jamey sees 20 or so movies per month—but has to bring an adult when they're R-rated "18A" flicks.

A hero's tale



In 1954, Marilyn Bell became a national hero when she became the first person to complete what was then the longest marathon swim ever attempted—51.5 km across Lake Ontario—at just 16 years of age. Now, Bell's gruelling course to glory is the basis of a two-hour TV movie to be aired on the CBC on Feb. 4. *Heart: The Marilyn Bell Story* tells the inspiring tale of her triumph over her detractors and her own fears. The Bernard Zukerman production balances tense scenes of Bell (Caroline Dhavernas) in the last, torturous moments of her historic feat with kitsch slices of 1950s Canadiana. Despite a paltry $4-million budget, director Manon Briand manages to deliver a sensitive, inspiring portrait of the swimmer.

Susan Oh

Nelly on a roll

There's no stopping Nelly Furtado. The 22-year-old Victoria native's debut album, *Whoa Nelly!*, has sold more than 100,000 copies since its release in October and won raves at home and abroad. Featured in major entertainment magazines and TV shows, the Portuguese-Canadian songstress is now tied atop the Juno parade with five nominations, including those for best single, songwriter and pop album—a feat equalled by pop fixture Barenaked Ladies, who compete in mostly the same categories. Other nominees include veterans the Tragically Hip, shortlisted three times, and relative newcomers soulDecision, the Matthew Good Band, Isabelle Boulay, Jesse Cook and Snow. Winners will be announced on March 4, in a ceremony to be hosted by comedian Rick Mercer and televised live by the CBC from Copps Coliseum in Hamilton.



Rick Gino/Big Mac Fotos

Furtado leads Juno nominations

Pop Movies

1. Snatch (116/1)	$1 740 898
2. Cast Away (227/5)	$1 660 598
3. Save the Last Dance (161/2)	$1,651 024
4. Traffic (138/5)	$1 549 104
5. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (77/7)	$969 693
6. What Women Want (196/6)	$967 644
7. Miss Congeniality (179/5)	$932 580
8. Finding Forrester (151/5)	$913,522
9. The Pledge (95/1)	$740 577
10. Thirteen Days (122/5)	$698 634

Top movies in Canada, ranked according to box-office receipts during the seven days that ended on Jan. 25. (In brackets: number of screens / weeks showing.)

Source: Entertainment Data Inc.

Down and dirty

Dana Milbank, White House correspondent for *The Washington Post*, refuses to take part in the media chorus denouncing so-called negative campaigning. He's even written a book about the 2000 U.S. presidential race, *Smashmouth* (HarperCollins), dedicated to the idea that during elections "nasty is nice—it's cool to be cruel." First, the author disposes of the notion there was once a golden era of civility. (Would that, Milbank wonders, be sometime before Abraham Lincoln's opponents mocked his "hideous ape-like form?") More to the point, he offers evidence that tough campaigning actually increases voter participation. Last year, Milbank notes, Al Gore and George Bush generated the most public enthusiasm during their nastiest attack periods. Attempts to take the high road ended in dropping poll numbers for both.



Best-Sellers

Fiction

	POSITION LAST WEEK
1. THE CONSTANT GARDENER, John Le Carré (6)	1
2. WINTER'S HEART, Robert Jordan (10)	5
3. VINYL CAFE UNPLUGGED, Stuart McLean (10)	3
4. THE BLIND ASSASSIN, Margaret Atwood (21)	4
5. THE SHAPE OF SNAKES, Minette Walters (2)	7
6. NO GREAT MISCHIEF, Alistair MacLeod (7)	6
7. ANIL'S GHOST, Michael Ondaatje (43)	8
8. PRODIGAL SUMMER, Barbara Kingsolver (10)	9
9. MERCY AMONG THE CHILDREN, David Adams Richards (18)	2
10. SOUL MOUNTAIN, Gao Xingjian (1)	

Nonfiction

1. FROM PARIS TO THE MOON, Adam Gopnik (12)	1
2. CANADA: A PEOPLE'S HISTORY, Ellen Gillmor and Pierre Turgeon (3)	2
3. SAINT SAUL, Donald Akenson (4)	4
4. THE DOG RULES (DAMN NEAR EVERYTHING), William Thomas (2)	3
5. LONDON: THE BIOGRAPHY, Peter Ackroyd (3)	5
6. EASTWARD TO TARTARY, Robert Kaplan (3)	6
7. THE BEATLES ANTHOLOGY, The Beatles (15)	7
8. ONE GOOD TURN, Witold Rybczynski (8)	5
9. HITLER: 1936-1945 NEMESIS, Ian Kershaw (1)	
10. THE GEOMETRY OF LOVE, Margaret Visser (16)	10

() Weeks on list

Compiled by Brian Bethune

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Anthony Wilson-Smith

A Landry quandary

One winter in the 1980s, a young Anglo journalist was in the northern Quebec region of Rouyn-Noranda on assignment when a snowstorm hit. All regular flights out of the local airport were cancelled, and the journalist discovered, unhappily, that his stay was likely to be much longer than expected. Just when things seemed most bleak, a local acquaintance offered potential salvation—a charter aircraft belonging to the Quebec government was waiting to fly a visiting provincial minister back to Quebec City. The only problem was that the minister was Bernard Landry—already well-known for his intemperate remarks, and irascibility. With little at risk except, perhaps, a tongue-lashing, the journalist approached Landry at a reception and asked to hitch a ride. Landry agreed immediately and was, on the bumpy two-hour flight back, a calming, charming and convivial host in both English and French.

That gracious host was, of course, the same Landry who almost certainly will become premier of Quebec in another couple of months. It is hard to reconcile that image with the graceless bully who popped up last week, likening the Canadian flag to "a piece of red rag"—and rudely dismissing Stéphane Dion as "the most detested politician in history." You could write that stuff off as a hissy fit from someone who knows better—except that Landry has been around the same block many times, and *still* can't rein himself in. This is the guy who dressed down a frightened Hispanic hotel clerk for voting No on referendum night in 1995—and only apologized to her after being informed that the incident had been captured on videotape. This is the same guy who at various times over the years has called Canada "a cultural Chernobyl" and described Quebec as the last colonized nation in the Western world.



Landry in Quebec City convivial and irascible

These days, with the exception of a pocket of aging diehards, the PQ bends over backward to appeal to different ethnic groups within Quebec: their buzz phrase is "territorial nationalism," meaning that they've formally dispensed with the old notion that only white Roman Catholic francophones qualify as *real* Quebecers. There's a case to be made that no one has worked harder within the PQ to promote that openness than the trilingual Landry (who also speaks fluent Spanish). Even when the sovereigntist cause seemed hopeless in the late 1980s, he was always available to preach tirelessly and fruitlessly to any Anglo group that needed a token Péquiste to disagree with. But then, as now, Landry always blew his accumulated goodwill by flying off the handle one more time. In public, he once argued that the federalist side needs more than 50 per cent in a referendum to have legitimacy—because that includes ethnic ballots, and what really counts are francophones' votes. In private, he is much more gracious. Montreal businessman Andy Nulman, who used to run the city's Just for Laughs comedy festival, recalls telling Landry about a trip to New York City he made with festival founder Gilbert Rozon. "There we were in Manhattan, a Québécois and an Anglo Jew . . ." Landry immediately interrupted him by saying: "No Andy, there you were in Manhattan, *deux* Québécois. . . ." And, says Nulman—a devout and enthusiastic federalist—Landry "has never been anything less than warm and gracious in private—which is why the other stuff always surprises me."

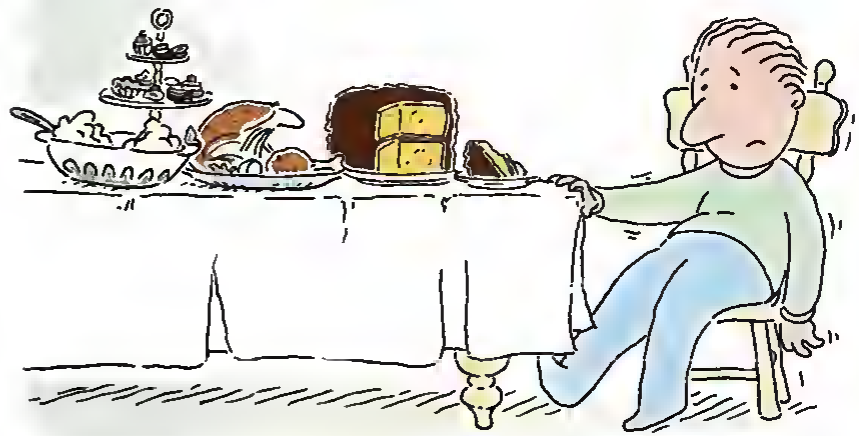
In a way, it shouldn't. Landry, 63, is part of a generation that, more than any other before or since, lives and breathes separatism: a woman who knew him as a young man once recalled that "in 1960, he wanted to be president of the Republic of Quebec." In 1963, he led a demonstration against Canadian National Railways president Donald Gordon after Gordon remarked that French-Canadians were not qualified for executive positions with CNR. (Today, francophone Paul Tellier is CEO of CN—and one of the most highly regarded corporate leaders in the country.) In 1970, Landry told filmmaker Denys Arcand that Quebecers risked sliding into the same condition as blacks in the United States. "As long as it will be possible to prevent this disaster from happening, to reverse the direction of things, and to progress towards sovereignty, I will be on the firing line," he said.

In fact, Landry's aging generation dates itself most by a sense of grievance about the rest of Canada that is alien to younger francophones. A part of his history that he seldom discusses is a period he spent in the Canadian Forces, where he rose to the rank of lieutenant. "You'd think," he once told an acquaintance, "that having travelled across this country as much as I did with the military, I would like it better." He didn't. Once, in a legislative debate in the national assembly in 1979, he let his bitterness towards that period show—complaining about the manner in which he was ordered to speak English by a superior.

Soon, he will be leader—not just of a party of like-minded sovereignists, but of seven million Canadians in the country's second-biggest province. Last week, he learned—not so much from predictably annoyed English-Canadians, but from the appalled responses of other Quebecers—that no one wants to see his nasty side. Anyone who covers politics long enough learns that some of its most gracious practitioners in public can be charmless and churlish in private. Landry proves the reverse is also true.

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